

Tuesday, June 20, 2017

BEWARE ORIGINAL INTENT and PROOF-TEXTING

My approach to interpreting the Scripture has been seriously challenged recently. I hold to an originalist approach, ie- what did the original writers intend by the words they chose to use. This is the same approach I also use to interpret the US Constitution. We see that approach to the Constitution challenged almost daily.

The Original Intent approach is also challenged by its use to justify Slavery from the Scripture by both the North and South before and during the Civil War. And again by its use to justify segregation and particularly Miscegenation as in the case of the Court case, Loving vs Virginia [I recommend the Movie called "Loving"]

The lesson is not to reject seeking the original intent of either the Bible or Constitution, but to be very careful in its use, especially paying careful attention to a study of original social and cultural context in the written document.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:31

Tuesday, May 2, 2017

LABOR DAY THE RIGHT WAY

God has spoken: "Six days you shall labor" [As He did] Exo.20:9

Paul commands us to work also: 1 Thess 4:11; 2 Thess 3:10-12

5 Standards for Work as God intends it to be

The Biblical mandate to rule & subdue (have dominion over) the earth and its creatures is consistently misused. All kinds of selfishness, greed, waste and exploitation are justified with it. A standard is needed to decide whether specific work is as God intends it to be. When is a specific work activity (or work environment) bad and to be rejected.? What is the Standard to judge?

That standard is the "image of God". It enables us to answer these questions biblically. God did not say: "I have made human beings. They have my authority to rule the earth." God said: "I have made humans to be like me, my image. Because they are my image, they are to rule the earth." The Image is not itself the mandate to have dominion. The Image determines how we are to have dominion. Human beings are to obey the "cultural mandate" as bearers of the image of God. The image is meant to govern the entire enterprise. This has practical implications: to act according to the image of God is to act according to the characteristics of God, as follows:

1. The Personal- the "person"

All that we do must value and respect "persons" above all- not simply "people", but all that is meant by "person". A "person" has infinite value. A "person" is defined by the ways in which God is a "person". It means a living being who is self conscious, knowable, who communicates meaningfully and can share in "personal" relationships; a person has a will and makes considered judgments. Like God, all Persons have the faculties of rationality, creativity, morality, communality and spirituality. Work which demeans, exploits, neglects, injures or destroys persons is evil

2. The Rational- rationality

God thinks and makes decisions in a reasonable, logical, orderly way All of creation reflects these qualities of its creator.

Work of any kind which is essentially, characteristically, unreasonable, illogical or chaotic is not acceptable

3. The Creative- creativity All work should seek, in appropriate ways, to be creative, artistic and beautiful, as is God and the natural world He has made.

Work which is uncreative, boring, deadening, repulsive or ugly should be rejected

4. The Moral- morality All work must be moral, righteous and just, as God defines those terms in his Word.

Work which is immoral, sinful or corrupt, must be rejected

5. The Communal- community

The work of cultivating and of culture must be done in, of and by a community ("Community" could simply be one's co-workers, a team or unit. It could be a Company. Community could be neighborhood or town. etc.) Work must seek to promote the welfare and good of all members of the (appropriate) community. We are our brothers and sisters keepers, accountable for the welfare of all. Work that is good will serve the good of the whole. Work which is done for selfish purposes or for self aggrandizement is not good. Work that harms

the community or violates personal relationships in the community
sinful.

SUMMARY

Allowing the image of God concept to guide us, requires these 5 principles. All employment, every project and work environments should be evaluated on these terms. Work that respects and protects persons and is reasonable, beautiful, moral and good for the community is good work. Work that is dehumanizing, unreasonable, ugly, immoral or selfish is bad work

Christians are not to engage in "bad" work or support the work of others that will knowingly harm, ruin, destroy or otherwise exploit themselves, their community or the Creation. Taking this stand and explaining why, would be a strong witness for God, the Creator.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:34

Wednesday, November 25, 2015

WHAT REALLY IS CHRIST'S MISSION? AND OUR MISSION?

Very well done material came in the mail yesterday promoting the very worthwhile work being done around the world by the organization called "Doctors without Borders".

All they do is amazing and they deserve to be supported. It is exemplary, good humanitarian work, but it is not Christian work- it is not done in Christ's name or for His Glory. It is not designed as a witness to the Gospel and is not designed to lead to conversions. It is completely secular. However it is exactly the kind of work that is so popular with Christians and increasingly being done by evangelical missionary agencies.

Advent begins this coming Sunday. During December Christians celebrate with joy the advent, the coming, of Christ into the world- the reason for the Season. Many believe His Mission in the world was to serve the poor, the outcast, the suffering and oppressed and we are now to do likewise. That has become the definition of the Gospel. Our call it is said, is to continue this mission of Christ. Thus we support the work done by Doctors without Borders and others like them. But this was not the original mission of Christ. This contemporary approach to "mission" is wrong. It is not our mission now. Christ's mission, then and now, is the Salvation of souls and that is our mission now. Humanitarian work is good, but it is not our primary work.

1 Timothy 1:15, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

Mark 2:17, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Luke 19:10, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Matthew 20:28, "Even as the Son of man came ...to give his life a ransom for many."

1 John 4:10, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his only to be the propitiation for our sins."

John 3:16-18, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believes on him is not condemned: but he that believes not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

Acts 3:26, "Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:25

Thursday, June 4, 2015

GLEANINGS FROM GENESIS 1-3

I have just posted my new study of Genesis 1-3 in 19 Parts on my website <http://www.reformedliving.org/>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:28

Friday, February 6, 2015

SEXUALITY

I just posted a series of Essays on my website with frank Biblical teaching about Human Sexuality

www.reformedliving.org/

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:06

Wednesday, December 24, 2014

ADVENT? THE REAL COMING OF CHRIST

Mark 13:5 Jesus [said] to them, "See that no one leads you astray. 6 Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. 21 ... if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. 22 For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders ... 23 But be on guard... 24 " in those days, after [the great] tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, 25 and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. 26 And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. cf Rev 1:7 Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. There are those who teach that the Second Coming happened in 70AD or, at least, in the past. This is "Preterism". I do not believe that is Scriptural. I accept what Mark records that Jesus said on the subject [above] on its face value. These days it is very common especially during Advent, to hear that Jesus' Second Coming is entirely spiritual and now, not future, not physical, not visible to everyone. That teaching, too is not Scriptural. The entire prophecy is totally spiritualized. The truth is that Jesus is in Heaven, seated on a Throne. He is engaged in what happens on earth, ie- His Spirit is. In that sense, only, we may say Jesus has come and is here, working among us. Great. But that is not the Bible Doctrine of the Second Coming, which is "coming" is personal, bodily and physical, future but imminent, even as our Resurrection shall be, at that time.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:42

Friday, December 12. 2014

DID GOD USE TORTURE?

The new movie "Exodus: Gods and Kings" reportedly does very effective work portraying the plagues God sent to inflict Pharaoh and the Egyptians to persuade them to "let my People go". Was this an example of the use of torture by God? How about His use of great painful afflictions on the world detailed in the Book of Revelation to persuade sinners to repent? Is this also torture"?

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 10:30

Saturday, October 4, 2014

THIS RAPTURE MOVIE BOMBS

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2014/october-web-only/left-behind.html>

Why the public fascination with apocalyptic, disaster, end of the world stories?

The classic text for "The Rapture" was not intended to put fear into non-Believers but to encourage Believers- see 1 Thes. 4:13-18

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 10:46

Wednesday, April 23, 2014

THE IMPORTANCE OF BELIEVING IN THE PHYSICAL RESURRECTION

1 Cor.15:29-34 ... If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die. Don't deceive yourselves--evil friendships destroy good characters. Turn to sober living, as it is only right that you should, and don't go on sinning. Some of you boast about your knowledge, but you have not a vestige of knowledge about God. It is to shame you that I speak.

Paul demands, "To what end is all the peril and the suffering if there is no life beyond?" The man who thinks that this life is all, and that there is nothing to follow it, may well say, "Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die." ... Jesus himself told about the rich fool who forgot eternity and took as his motto, "Eat, drink and be merry." (Luke 12:19).

Take away the thought of a life to come and this life loses its values. Take away the idea that this life is a preparation for a greater life to follow and the bonds of honour and morality are loosened. It is useless to argue that this should not be so and that men should not be good and honourable simply for the sake of some reward. The fact remains that the man who believes that this is the only world tends to live as if the things of this world are all that matter.

So Paul insists that the Corinthians must not associate with those who say that there is no resurrection; for this would be to risk an infection which can pollute life. To say that there is no resurrection is not a sign of superior knowledge; it is a sign of utter ignorance of God

The above is excerpted (and abridged) from William Barclay's Commentary on 1 Corinthians 15

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 10:31

Monday, April 7, 2014

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT WAGES

Workers must be treated well and fairly ...and must be paid fully and promptly [i.e.- as per contract]

Jas 5:1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. 3 Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. 5 You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; 4 Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

Lev 19:13 "Do not defraud or rob your neighbor. "Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker..

Deut 24:14 Do not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether that worker is a fellow Israelite or a foreigner residing in one of your towns. 15 Pay them their wages each day before sunset, because they are poor and are counting on it. Otherwise they may cry to the LORD against you, and you will be guilty of sin.

Deut 25:4 Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain. cf 1 Cor.9:9

Jer 22:13 "Woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness, his upper rooms by injustice, making his own people work for nothing, not paying them for their labor.

Mal 3:5 "So I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear me," says the LORD Almighty.

I Tim 5:18 "The laborer deserves his wages."

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 10:24

Thursday, January 30, 2014

DID THE EMMYS AWARD "ART"?

How do Christians define Art? What does the Bible teach about Art? I just posted a 4-part Essay exploring the purpose and meaning of Art.

<http://www.reformedliving.org/>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 19:31

Wednesday, November 13, 2013

NEW: DEVOTIONAL BIBLE STUDIES AVAILABLE

For many years I have been emailing devotional Bible Studies- "QT Thots". Today I have begun posting new ones on my website under the category of Bible Studies-<http://www.reformedliving.org/>
A select group of 64 of them, arranged under 16 Topics, can be found at <http://www.qthots.com/> These were selected to be helpful to non or new Christians, covering the Basics of Christian Faith and Life.
I pray the Lord will use them to bless you and and help you to apply the Word to the real world.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 09:33

Tuesday, October 22, 2013

BEING REASONABLE ABOUT "GAY MARRIAGE"

OK Let's think this through. New Jersey is the latest State to legally recognize "Gay Marriage". The very fact that the qualifier "Gay" is used is a clue that we are not talking about Marriage- NJ did not just officially recognize Marriage. It had done that for hundreds of years. It is recognizing something different than Marriage- "Gay Marriage". Here is the reasoning that requires all Evangelicals not to do what the State of New Jersey has done:

How do you know God created the world and you? The Bible says so.

How do you know God loves you? The Bible says so!

How do you know Jesus died to atone for your sins? The Bible says so.

How do you know that Jesus has saved you. The Bible says so.

How do we know that Marriage is only for a man and a woman? The Bible says so. Gen. 2:18-24

How do we know that a follower of Jesus should believe Marriage is only for a man and a woman? Jesus says so.

Matt.19:4-6

If we accept #1-4, than we must accept #5-6. It is not reasonable to accept what the Bible says about Salvation and reject what it say about Marriage. If it is not trustworthy and not the authority on the subject of Marriage, then it is not trustworthy or authoritative on the subject of Salvation or anything else we believe. We can not have our cake and eat it too.

[Historical Evangelicals, by definition, accept the Bible, as the verbally inspired Word of God read and interpreted in a common sense historical-grammatical way. As such, it is their First and Final Authority in all matters of faith and practice.]

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 10:28

Wednesday, October 9, 2013

WRESTLING WITH SPIRITUAL FORCES OF EVIL

Ephesians 6:12 we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.
What or who is Paul writing about? What is the connection between these "spiritual powers" and current events. I have put an extensive study about spiritual warfare on my website. Very appropriate for Halloween, Zombies and the grid-lock in Washington
http://www.reformedliving.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=174:qspiritual-powersq-an-extensive-bible-study&catid=71:special-topics&Itemid=59

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 10:10

SCALIA AND SATAN

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2013/october/antonin-scalia-c-s-lewis-devil-screw-tape-supreme-court.html?>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 10:07

Tuesday, August 6, 2013

A NEW WEBSITE WITH MY DEVOTIONAL WRITING

Three times every week for several years now I have written and emailed devotional material to friends that I pray will be a blessing to them. These are called "QT Thots" [Thoughts for Quiet Times with God]. My son, Kevin, a Publisher and Editor, has selected 64 of them and arranged them into 16 Categories with 4 Topics each on a new website. I believe he has done an excellent job and I hope you shall visit the site and see if these QT Thots are helpful to you or to other readers you may know. We pray they shall be.

<http://www.qthots.com/>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:49

Thursday, March 28, 2013

GIVING THE BIBLE THE BIRD

Make no mistake: the Bible is absolutely clear: It reveals Marriage is intended by God to be heterosexual. Marriage is defined by the Bible. By that definition there is no way the union of homosexuals can be a "Marriage"- no matter how loving and committed the partners may be and no matter how legal the Courts or States may decide it is. This debate is, ultimately about the authority of the Bible- the authority of God of Himself. The debate before the Supreme Court is not about Civil Rights at all. What we see today in American society is a movement that challenges, rejects and denies that authority. Increasingly Americans are rejecting and trashing the Book. Make no mistake about it. That is what the debate is really about and this is only the latest battle.

And contemporary Evangelicals are increasingly on the wrong side of it on many issues.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:56

AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY REPORT: READING GOING DOWN

Americans overwhelming (77%) believe morals and values are declining in the U.S. The most-cited cause for the decline is a lack of Bible reading. As in previous years, the survey found that the Bible remains a highly valued, influential force in America. But beliefs about the Bible and its role in society are becoming increasingly polarized—particularly when the data is examined by age group.

The research also uncovered a significant disconnect in belief versus behavior. While 66% of those surveyed agreed that the Bible contains everything a person needs to know to live a meaningful life, 58% say they don't personally want wisdom and advice from the Bible and about the same amount (57%) read it fewer than five times per year.

READ THE REPORT AND CHECK OUT THE GRAPHICS

<http://www.americanbible.org/state-bible#.UVG6nRfqmSp>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:50

Wednesday, February 27, 2013

NEW BIBLE STUDIES: MARRIAGE, DIVORCE

I have just posted new Essays on my website about Marriage and Divorce
<http://www.reformedliving.org>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 19:36

Saturday, February 2, 2013

GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT- A new Bible Study

I have just posted an in-depth Bible Study about the Gifts of the Spirit and Speaking in Tongues

http://www.reformedliving.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=416:gifts-of-the-holy-spirit-speaking-in-tongues&catid=40:bible-studies&Itemid=55

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:58

Saturday, December 22, 2012

WHAT BIBLE SAYS ABOUT THE CREATION AND USE OF WEALTH

Wealth, much wealth, is not Evil. Wealth is a blessing from God to be both enjoyed and shared with others. The Bible teaches Private Property and Free-Market Capitalism, not Socialism. But there are Conditions to having Wealth.

Read my full study-

http://www.reformedliving.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=127:biblical-basics-about-wealth&catid=65:economics&Itemid=57

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 10:45

Wednesday, December 5, 2012

DOES THE BIBLE MANDATE SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC FREEDOM?

THE MANY USES OF THE WORD "FREEDOM"

"With the advent of WWII, the dominant abstract word was "Freedom" and many were harkening once again for the Declaration of Independence and its cry for Freedom. in 1941, FDR preached the "Four Freedoms" (of speech, of worship and from want and from fear) and politicians spoke of "Free Europe", freedom-loving Nations and the "Free World". There was even a Freedom Train" traveling the Country with the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, papers by Alexander Hamilton and the Gettysburg Address, as well as the Documents of surrender signed by Germany and Japan. WWII was followed by the Cold War and the language of Freedom was again employed to arouse the Nation. This War was to free captive Europe from Communist slavery, to free China from the Maoists. The cold war was fought for cultural freedom, the free market and free enterprise and ultimately, for a free world! Freedom, Capitalism and Democracy were all bound together" (Contested Truths, D.T. Rodgers,p.215f). It was not long before "Freedom" as used above was transformed into "Rights"- social rights and economic rights- rights for protection from poverty and rights for security in old age and against unemployment now. Rights for decent housing and medical care. The United Nations a Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Eventually, there was the demand for Civil Rights for African Americans (viewing of the Freedom train was segregated into Whites only and Colored only sessions). There were demands for the Rights of Women, Children, the Unborn, Gays, Native Americans, Prisoners as well as welfare rights and rights of privacy, of expression, of Education and Protection and, fittingly, the right to die [Euthanasia] Read my extensive article here- <http://www.reformedliving.org/>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 10:59

Tuesday, November 13, 2012

THE SECOND COMING: BAD NEWS/GOOD NEWS

Joel 2 Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near. 11 ... Truly the day of the LORD is great; terrible indeed-who can endure it? Revelation 19:1-10 After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, 'Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power to our God, 2 for his judgments are true and just; he has judged the great whore who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged on her the blood of his servants.' 3 Once more they said, 'Hallelujah! The smoke goes up from her forever and ever.' 4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who is seated on the throne, saying, 'Amen. Hallelujah!' 5 And from the throne came a voice saying, 'Praise our God, all you his servants, and all who fear him, small and great.' 6 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying out, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. 7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; 8 to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure'-for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. 9 And the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 09:48

BIBLICAL HOME SCHOOLING

Psalm 78

2 ...I will declare the mysteries of ancient times. 3 That which we have heard and known and what our forefathers have told us, we will not hide from their children. 4 We will recount to generations to come the praiseworthy deeds and the power of the LORD and the wonderful works he has done. 5 He gave his decrees to Jacob and established a law for Israel, which he commanded them to teach their children; 6 That the generations to come might know and the children yet unborn; that they in their turn might tell it to their children; 7 So that they might put their trust in God and not forget the deeds of God, but keep his commandments;

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 09:21

Monday, November 12, 2012

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT IMMIGRANTS?

Probably the major argument used by Christians in favor of open borders and full inclusion of "illegal aliens" into American life with all rights and privileges of Citizens is based on the Bible and what it allegedly says about "aliens", "sojourners" and "strangers" in Israel. The Bible has texts like these-
Exo 22:21 "You shall not wrong a sojourner [a temporary inhabitant, a newcomer lacking inherited rights or foreigners in Israel] or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.
Lev 19:34 "You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.
See the rest of this study at www.reformedliving.org/

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 10:38

NEW BIBLE STUDY ON THE BEATITUDES

Matthew 5:13 "You are the salt of the earth: but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden underfoot by men. 14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. 15 Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

The salt and the light of the world are not Christ or the Gospel, nor are they people who evangelize. The reference is to people who exhibit these characteristics. Their life, how they are with others, what they do- all of that together is the salt and light that the world needs.

I just posted an extensive study of the Beatitudes to define what these characteristics are.
www.reformedliving.org

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 10:26

Wednesday, November 7, 2012

BEWARE THE BEAST!!

REVELATION 13 ESV-

1 I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. 2 And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon [Satan] gave his power and his throne and great authority. 3 One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast. 4 And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast [the State], and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"

5 And the beast ... was allowed to exercise authority... . 6 It opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven [the Church Triumphant]. 7 Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation [world-wide Totalitarian Government], 8 and all ... will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. [italics added]

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 17:45

Friday, October 12. 2012

HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE BIBLE (REVISED)

I have revised my articles on the Bible and Human Rights and urge you to read them.
<http://www.reformedliving.org/index.php?>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 13:39

Tuesday, August 28, 2012

EPHESIANS 6: OUR OFFENSIVE WEAPONS FOR SPIRITUAL WARFARE

I have just posted a new Bible Study on my website at <http://www.reformedliving.org/>
It is about doing battle for the minds of men, women and children- spiritual warfare. It is an uncommon take on the use of the offensive weapons God has given to us for the conflict.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 17:35

Saturday, July 28. 2012

NEW BIBLE STUDY: EXPERIENCING FORGIVENESS

45 [Jesus] opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, 47 and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations

EXPERIENCING THE FORGIVENESS OF OUR SINS

"Father, ...forgive us [your children] our debts...trespasses...sins"**BEFORE THERE CAN BE THE EXPERIENCE OF FORGIVENESS, THERE MUST BE THE EXPERIENCE OF REPENTANCE**We must define "Repentance" carefully. It is not a matter of feelings, nor of guilt or regret. Neither does the experience of Forgiveness come through venting or talking- getting something "off your chest". It is not about attempts to reform or to gain a second chance**THE ONLY THING THAT BRINGS LASTING & GENUINE RELEASE FROM GUILT IS BIBLICAL REPENTANCE. BIBLICAL REPENTANCE HAS 4 PARTS**

Follow the whole Study here- <http://www.reformedliving.org/>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:03

Saturday, July 21. 2012

REDISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH AND INEQUALITY

In this week's column, E.J. Dionne wrote, "It's good that conservatives are finally taking seriously the problems of inequality and declining upward mobility. It's unfortunate that they often evade the ways in which structural changes in the economy, combined with conservative policies, have made matters worse". He goes on to comment about columns by David Brooks and Michael Gerson- Brooks's conclusion, Dionne says, is "Liberals are going to have to be willing to champion norms that say marriage should come before child-rearing and be morally tough about it. Conservatives are going to have to be willing to accept tax increases or benefit cuts so that more can be spent on the earned-income tax credit and other programs that benefit the working class." But Dionne adds, "The barrier here is not liberal attitudes toward the family but conservative attitudes toward government." [and] a modest amount of "economic redistribution" — to offset the radical redistribution toward the very rich of recent decades — can begin the process of restoring the kind of mobility we once bragged about."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/ej-dionne-a-challenge-to-conservatives/2012/07>

Is involuntary redistribution by the Government of private wealth from those who have it to those who do not a Biblical idea? NO. I have explained why several times in articles on my website. For example see-

http://www.reformedliving.org/index.php?option=com_content&view

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 09:38

Monday, July 9, 2012

NEW CT SURVEY: CREATIONISM vs SCIENTISM

Americans changing views about Evolution and Creation: educational, political and church factors
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2012/july-august/evolution-and-creationism-infographic.html?>

Short history of theological, Biblical issues at stake in the Evolution and Creation Debate
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2012/july-august/the-evolution-of-the-debate.html?>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 09:14

Monday, May 14, 2012

ESSENTIAL CONCEPTS MISSING IN THE DISCUSSION OF GAY "MARRIAGE"

I want to add more thought to my posts below about Gay "Marriage". A Concept that is rarely mentioned on the subject is the purpose for which God instituted Marriage in the first place. After creating the natural world, the Earth in particular, God created "Man" in His Image so "Man" might represent God and be equipped to work with Him in the Natural world's development and care. "Man" was created to live on the earth to function as God's "lieu-tenant" here. But the collective noun, "Man", i.e.- all human beings considered collectively, is both male and female. The Image of God incorporates both genders. Together they are mutually responsible to carry out the Creation or Cultural Mandate. Marriage is the next and key step to that work. Marriage is not an end in itself, let alone simply the loving caring relationship of two people for their personal fulfillment.

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Going from the Universal to the particular, "Man" becomes male and female and male and female go on to become husband and wife. God instituted Marriage for heterosexual couples to do the work, in partnership of developing and caring for the Earth, et al. That is the next Concept missing in today's discussion of Gay "Marriage". There is something special, unique, one of a kind, about the union of a man and woman. Fulfillment of the Mandate requires that special union of the two genders. They each share a common humanity, each is a person, but a man and a woman each bring different gifts, abilities and functions to the partnership. They need each other. They fulfill each other. God's intention in Marriage was for a spiritual, mental, emotional, social, as well as physical, union of both sexes. The classic and fundamental text is

Gen 2:18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." 19 Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. We could go on as to other Concepts of the Master (Biblical) Plan for Marriage. One is that Marriage normally includes Family. The Biblical Marriage is a Covenant commitment for a life time ("till death do us part") and Family is inclusive of and extended across generations. The husband and wife are to be fruitful and multiply, both as an expression and preservation of who they are together and as part of their responsibility to care for each other and the Earth. [This is normative. In God's providence, not all couples are able to have children, just as God also calls and gives grace to certain individuals to live a single life. But that is God's choice, not theirs to make]. We celebrate, respect and value all wives, but in God's Master Plan for Marriage, men represent God in a unique way to their wives and children (and Community) and are responsible to teach and pass on the Faith to them. All of these Concepts, and more, must be included in the definition and discussion of Marriage.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 09:41

Tuesday, May 8, 2012

JOHN STOTT on ACTS 2:42

This digital recording was created at Kudos Press from an original tape cassette recording: Listen to John Stott speak about the fellowship of the believers as found in Acts 2:42: John Stott and The Fellowship of the Believers, 1977 (41:43) <http://kudospress.com/serendipity/index.php?/archives/110-John-Stott-and-The-Fellowship-of-the-Believers.html>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 19:56

Friday, April 20, 2012

SCRIPTURE FOR "EARTH DAY"

Here is a wonderful Psalm that makes the on-going relationship between God the Creator and His Creation very clear. He loves it and is constantly involved in its operation and care [it also has a lot to teach us about the Nature of God as well as about the relationship between "Faith and Science"]

Psalm 104 Bless the Lord, O my soul;* O Lord my God, how excellent is your greatness! you are clothed with majesty and splendour. You wrap yourself with light as with a cloak* and spread out the heavens like a curtain. You lay the beams of your chambers in the waters above;* you make the clouds your chariot; you ride on the wings of the wind. You make the winds your messengers* and flames of fire your servants. You have set the earth upon its foundations,* so that it never shall move at any time. You covered it with the deep as with a mantle;* the waters stood higher than the mountains. At your rebuke they fled;* at the voice of your thunder they hastened away. They went up into the hills and down to the valleys beneath,* to the places you had appointed for them. You set the limits that they should not pass;* they shall not again cover the earth. You send the springs into the valleys;* they flow between the mountains. All the beasts of the field drink their fill from them,* and the wild asses quench their thirst. Beside them the birds of the air make their nests* and sing among the branches. You water the mountains from your dwelling on high;* the earth is fully satisfied by the fruit of your works. You make grass grow for flocks and herds* and plants to serve us all; That they may bring forth food from the earth,* and wine to gladden our hearts, Oil to make a cheerful countenance,* and bread to strengthen the heart. The trees of the Lord are full of sap,* the cedars of Lebanon which he planted, In which the birds build their nests,* and in whose tops the stork makes his dwelling. The high hills are a refuge for the mountain goats,* and the stony cliffs for the rock badgers. You appointed the moon to mark the seasons,* and the sun knows the time of its setting. You make darkness that it may be night,* in which all the beasts of the forest prowl. The lions roar after their prey* and seek their food from God. The sun rises and they slip away* and lay themselves down in their dens. The labourer goes forth to work* and to toil until the evening. O Lord, how manifold are your works!* in wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. Yonder is the great and wide sea with its living things too many to number,* creatures both small and great. There move the ships, and there is that Leviathan,* which you have made for the sport of it. All of them look to you* to give them their food in due season. You give it to them, they gather it;* you open your hand and they are filled with good things. You hide your face and they are terrified;* you take away their breath and they die and return to their dust. You send forth your Spirit and they are created;* and so you renew the face of the earth. May the glory of the Lord endure for ever;* may the Lord rejoice in all his works. He looks at the earth and it trembles;* he touches the mountains and they smoke. I will sing to the Lord as long as I live;* I will praise my God while I have my being. May these words of mine please him;* I will rejoice in the Lord. Let sinners be consumed out of the earth,* and the wicked be no more. Bless the Lord, O my soul.* Alleluia!

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 08:35

BEWARE RETURNING TO THE WILDERNESS

Creation is about God turning wilderness [TOHU] into fertile land to be inhabited and good for human beings. The "Cultural Mandate" is the Commission God gave to Humanity to continue God's creational work, developing the wilderness into Civilization for Humanity (Gen. 1:26-28) But a corrupt Civilization will return to the Wilderness. 1:1 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth [land] was [not became] without form [TOHU= chaos also wilderness or wasteland] and void [BOHU] "Without form and void" = thoroughly disorganized, unproductive and uninhabited] and darkness was over the face of the deep [the watery deep, the ocean with its dark depths, a chaotic abyss]. When first created, what was to become land in vs 9-10 was a thoroughly disorganized, unproductive and uninhabited mass covered by deep water and darkness. Isaiah 45:18 For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it empty [BOHU], he formed it to be inhabited.) When the original 6 days of creation were finished, the earth was abundantly and naturally fertile and productive (Gen 2 and 3) and pronounced "good". Then came the "Fall" (Gen 3) and the Land (the natural world) was cursed by God and very difficult to dominate. let alone cultivate. And much later, when the Prophets warn of God's impending judgment against rebellious Humanity or Nations they use the image of the original earth (Gen 1:2) to describe what a particular City or Nation shall become: an uninhabited infertile wasteland. Returning to Nature was not a good thing!

Read the entire Essay, "Cultural Mandate" at <http://www.reformedliving.org>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 08:29

Wednesday, April 18, 2012

AN ORIGINAL JOHN STOTT LECTURE ON PREACHING !

There is a true treat at Kudos Press website for all of you who remember John Stott. There you will find an original lecture he gave on how to prepare and deliver an expositional sermon, such as he was famous for doing. Fresh from Urbana in late 1976, he delivered this message in a church in California. This is a very audible tape which is inspirational as well as very helpful to all who want to preach the Word effectively. I urge you to check it out!
<http://kudospress.com/serendipity/>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 21:14

Friday, April 13. 2012

GOD'S GOALS FOR THE ECONOMY

The Law and the Economy Economics can be defined as "a social science concerned chiefly with description and analysis of the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services" -----Merriam-Webster Economics is about the choices people make with regard to scarce resources in a particular time and place – about the exchanges people make of things [time, possessions, money, etc] desired less, for things [time, possessions, money, etc] desired more. People chose to sacrifice some things in order to obtain other things because there is a scarcity of those things and nothing scarce is free (every scarce thing has a price). These choices are affected by values and incentives. They should also be determined by long-range (rather than immediate) consequences. It is in guiding such choices that the Bible is most relevant on economic matters. The Law of God is more than the 10 Commandments. It begins in Genesis and there we learn what are the ultimate Goals of Economics. Most textbooks about Economics are mathematical and analytical. They omit or deny any discussion of Ultimate Economic Goals. If there are any Goals, the common view is that they are determined by individual persons, businesses or governments. Economists are pragmatic and their work is to help whomever they work for, to achieve their goals, whatever their goals may be. But Christians who want to live by the Scripture believe that their are Ultimate Economic Goals and they are set by God Himself in His Law The Ultimate Goals of Economics according to the Law of God Life: The Earth is to sustain life, particularly all human life: Natural resources are not sole property of any ethnic or racial group or of any particular Country or Nation. They are for the life of all people Growth ["be fruitful and increase"]: The Global population and its needs are to be expected to continually increase, therefore so must production. God promises unlimited resources Such growth of population and production will result in surplus and scarcity of goods and services. This will lead to exchange and trade governed by supply and demand Stewardship: It is the responsibility of all peoples to care for and develop natural resources for the well-being of all. Nothing is to be hoarded, wasted, neglected or exploited [thus unlimited resources become limited] see Psalm 24:1,115:16 Sharing: Natural resources are to be shared by all- all are to have, not equal amounts, but enough. There must be no monopolizing for the private gain of individuals, groups, corporations or Nations Work ["fill and "] Everyone around the globe must have a part, according to their ability and opportunity, in the economic processes of production, distribution as well as consumption of goods and services. These are the Goals Christians must advocate and seek to achieve, at least in their own lives

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:45

THE FALL AND THE ECONOMY

Economic Principles after the "Fall" (Genesis 3) I.) The Fall As a consequence of the "Fall". the Five God-given Principles to govern economic practice: Life, Growth, Stewardship, Sharing and Work have been violated throughout history 1. Stewardship has been universally rejected and replaced by absolute private ownership, greed and the exploitation of natural resources for personal gain 2. The natural world itself is generally uncooperative and resistant to cultivation 3. The work process has been corrupted, often being harsh and demeaning for millions of people 4. The Rights & Responsibilities of all people to work and share in economics processes and their products are often denied or commonly manipulated in favor of a few 5. Economic growth has become an obsession, even an idol; prosperity, materialism and consumerism are all pervasive God and economic justice are inseparable. All of these developments are condemned by God and His Prophets. Foreseeing the problem, God announced a plan to rectify the situation. Of all the peoples in the world, God made a Covenant with Abraham and his descendants: He would be their God. They would be His People. He promised to give them Land of their own. They, in turn, would live in this Land under the Economic Principles outlined above, This becomes the Model by which the Church must live

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:43

THE GIFT OF LAND

II.) The Land Promised: a Gift Genesis 12:1 The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. Genesis 15:5 He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars-if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." 6 Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness. 7 He also said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it." Genesis 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless. 2 I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers." 3 Abram fell face down, and God said to

him, 4 "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. 5 No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. 6 I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. 7 I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. 8 The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."Deuteronomy 11:8 Observe therefore all the commands I am giving you today, so that you may have the strength to go in and take over the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, 9 and so that you may live long in the land that the LORD swore to your forefathers to give to them and their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey. 10 The land you are entering to take over is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you planted your seed and irrigated it by foot as in a vegetable garden. 11 But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven. 12 It is a land the LORD your God cares for; the eyes of the LORD your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:41

GOD'S COVENANT WITH HIS PEOPLE

God owns all the Earth [Creation] and He gave a portion of it to His People, Israel. A. The Land was a gift- They have not earned it nor deserved it [or anything that will come from it]. B. Israel would be totally dependent on the Land-Gift. All they will possess will come from this Land and thus from God.C. God is dependability to bless the Land and provide Israel's needs.He will keep the Covenant D. The Land-Gift is Proof of the Covenant relationship: How would Israel know they are God's People? He gave them the Land. It is part of their identity. Israel is inconceivable apart from the LandE. God entrusts the care of the Land to the tribes-families-individuals who belong to IsraelThe concept of property rights is based on God's dividing up of the Land in this way for its development. Joshua 13:1 When Joshua was old and well advanced in years, the LORD said to him, "You are very old, and there are still very large areas of land to be taken over. 2 "This is the land that remains: all the regions of the Philistines and Geshurites: 3 from the Shihor River on the east of Egypt to the territory of Ekron on the north, all of it counted as Canaanite ... 4 from the south, all the land of the Canaanites, from Arah of the Sidonians as far as Aphek, the region of the Amorites, 5 the area of the Gebalites; etc 6 "... Be sure to allocate this land to Israel for an inheritance, as I have instructed you, 7 and divide it as an inheritance among the nine tribes and half of the tribe of Manasseh." 8 The other half of Manasseh, the Reubenites and the Gadites had received the inheritance that Moses had given them east of the Jordan, as he, the servant of the LORD, had assigned it to them. 14 But to the tribe of Levi he gave no inheritance, since the offerings made by fire to the LORD , the God of Israel, are their inheritance, as he promised them.Joshua 14:1 Now these are the areas the Israelites received as an inheritance in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun and the heads of the tribal clans of Israel allotted to them. 2 Their inheritances were assigned by lot to the nine-and-a-half tribes, as the LORD had commanded through Moses. 3 Moses had granted the two-and-a-half tribes their inheritance east of the Jordan but had not granted the Levites an inheritance among the rest, 4 for the sons of Joseph had become two tribes-Manasseh and Ephraim. The Levites received no share of the land but only towns to live in, with pasture lands for their flocks and herds. 5 So the Israelites divided the land, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. Etc Numbers 26,27,34 and Joshua 13-19 describe the dividing up of the Promised Land

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:39

PRIVATE PROPERTY AND PROFITS

All of the Land and its resources were shared by all the people through their family. Every household had a part of the national inheritance from God. Such ownership was their Right as a member of the Covenant People of God.Deuteronomy 26... 8 So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with miraculous signs and wonders. 9 He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; 10 and now I bring the first fruits of the soil that you, O LORD, have given me."One of the greatest sins in Israel was to deprive, steal, a man's land from him. He not only lost the land, he lost his heritage and his identity as a member of the People of God-but especially, he lost the major evidence of his covenant relationship with God. For an example of this sin read the story of Naboth's Vineyard in I Kings 21 The greatest punishment that God could bring upon Israel for its sins was exile from the Land. The greatest redemption was to return Israel from exile to the Land"Given to me" [v.10 above] is not in an absolute sense: "Given to me"means it is mine to care for on God's behalf. "Given to me" to be its steward. The Israelite understood that the particular plot of land he inherited was his is part of the entire Land that he personally was responsible for. The Israelite was never to forget that he was always and ever only a steward. As God said, Lev 25:23 "... the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants." Private Property, working that property, making a profit from that work, accumulating wealth are all Scriptural; but "ownership", et al, conveyed responsibility to develop, care for and use the Land (profit & wealth) as God wanted.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:37

SHARING THE LAND

III.) Land requires Lifestyle: The Economic Principles, as adjusted for life under the Covenant, after the Fall:1. Sharing- All Creation is intended by God for the sustenance of the life of all. All the Land was divided among the families and households. Given the differences in terrain, the variety of geography, everyone would have enough, but not the same. (Thus trade and commerce) Because of natural disasters, tragedies, violence, esp. warfare, and theft [exploitation], many people lost their portion of the Land. Widows, orphans, and farmers became landless poor and, often, indentured servants [serfs/slaves] These are the typical Poor of the Old Testament Scripture. They belong to the Covenant People of God. They are righteous people of faith, who look to the Lord as their only hope in their distress. When Scripture mentions repeatedly God's concern for "the poor", these are usually the people He is concerned about: the Righteous who are innocent victims of tragedy and oppression. The Mosaic Law commands specific ways in which people can share the wealth God has given them:1. PUTTING THE LORD FIRST- Law of the First Born & First Fruit: God claimed first born children and animals and first crop of the Harvest2. EXTENDED FAMILY- Kinship: extended family responsible for taking in widows and orphans or buying back land lost to debt3. TITHING- Law of Tithes: 2/3rd of it for Worship and support of Priests (who had no land of their own) and 1/3rd to be given to the poor4. WORKFARE- Gleaning: produce from crops, vineyards and fruit trees were to be left for the poor to help themselves5. FORGIVENESS OF DEBT- The Sabbatical Year: Land was to rest, debtors to be "forgiven" and indentured servants to be freedAll of these were very practical ways of loving our neighbor in need. All remind us that God is the owner of all we have. Failure to honor these laws re the poor was considered by God and His prophets to be very serious sin, evil, injustice. Deuteronomy 15:4 ... there should be no poor among you, for in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you, 5 if only you fully obey the LORD your God and are careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today. 7 If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother. 8 Rather be openhanded and freely lend him whatever he needs. 9 Be careful not to harbor this wicked thought: [I do not have to help the poor] ...do not show ill will toward your needy brother and give him nothing. He may then appeal to the LORD against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. 10 Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. 11 There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be open handed toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:33

WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

2. Work- All people have the right and responsibility to be engaged in economic work, ie- in the production and distribution of goods and services. Failure to honor these laws re workers was considered by God and His prophets to be very serious sin. a. Indentured servants were to be treated fairly and not oppressed or abused b. All workers (employees) were to be paid fully and promptly c. All workers, including animals, were to be given regular time off for rest from work -the Sabbath3. Economic Growth- Growth in population requires growth in economic production. This is to be desired and expected. Christians tend to interpret this concept by one of two extremes: laissez faire, freemarket Capitalism or totally State controlled production and distribution, ie- Socialismlais-sez-faire = French laissez faire, to let (people) do (as they choose) a doctrine opposing governmental interference in economic affairs beyond the minimum necessary for the maintenance of peace and property rightsSo-cial-ism = any of various economic and political theories advocating collective or governmental ownership and administration of the means of production and distribution of goodsCap-i-tal-ism = an economic system characterized by private or corporate ownership of capital goods, by investments that are determined by private decision, and by prices, production, and the distribution of goods that are determined mainly by competition in a free marketThere is no State, as we know it today, in the Books of Moses. The growth of population and production forecast in Genesis 1-2, will normally result, apart from any State, in surplus and scarcity of good and services. This will lead to exchange and trade governed by supply and demand. This is closer to free-market Capitalism than to Socialism

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:30

BIBLICAL SAFEGUARDS AGAINST GREED

The Fall changes the dynamics involved in this growth. It especially leads to the control for personal advantage of the means of both production and distribution of goods and services. The greed and selfishness generated by the Fall leads to huge accumulation of wealth by a relative few for the benefit of a few. This is wrong. The Mosaic Law has built in safeguards against this greed. There are many laws designed to prevent or limit the growth of private wealth at the cost of

economic injustice (violation of the Economic Principles). 1. multiple division and ownership of land 2. inalienability of land from its owners 3. redemption option [see "kinsman" below] 4. the Jubilee 5. Respect for property markers (ownership) 6. Prohibition of taking interest from fellow Covenant members on personal loans [usury] 7. Restriction of the practice of taking pledges to cover personal loans to fellow Covenant members 8. Specific prohibition of the King accumulating great wealth for his personal use

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:28

STEWARDSHIP

4. Stewardship- The dominate Biblical economic concept is "Stewardship." God, as Creator, has given responsibility for the management [stewardship] of the Created World [Nature, including all living creatures & all natural resources, eg- fossil fuels such as oil] to Human Beings. He holds all people personally accountable in this stewardship. Profit and Wealth are to be sought, but God holds people accountable for sharing the wealth that He enables each to have. It is really His all along. Deut 8:7 For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land-a land with streams and pools of water, with springs flowing in the valleys and hills; 8 a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; 9 a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills. Notice the God-given provision of a natural resource (copper) and God's expectation that people will work, ie-dig it out of the ground 10 When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. 11 Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. 12 Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, 13 and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied God expects increase in personal economic growth. It is a good thing, but there is a spiritual danger- 14 then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 15 He led you through the vast and dreadful desert, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. 16 He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you. 17 You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." 18 But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:26

WHY THE BIBLE APPLIES TO ECONOMICS TODAY

Are Biblical Laws or Norms for Economics to be obeyed by Christians today? It is not sufficient to say that Christians are to love and serve their neighbors or the "poor". How do we define that love and service? What specifically is involved? Without an external authority, we have only our inner, gut, feelings and personal values to guide us. Perhaps we have a faith-community to help, using its values. How can we be sure that those values are not simply culturally determined [even "counter-culture" values are defined by "culture"]. Has God given no direction for how we are to love and serve others? Is the latter always a matter of context and circumstances, changing as they change? God has given direction- His Word, particularly His Law. The way of Israel and the Land is a paradigm, a model, for how God's original Plan for all Humanity and all of Creation were meant to exist. Israel failed. The Old Covenant was a step in the right direction, but not enough. The Fall was too pervasive. Personal regeneration was needed. That is provided for in Christ. The "Israel and the Land" Model applies now to God's New Covenant People. Its principles need to be adapted to this Century. By the power of the Holy Spirit in our regenerated hearts, this is a Model for how Christians are to live today. It is a Model of Theonomy

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:21

Friday, December 2, 2011

SUMMARY OF STUDY: IS AMERICA CHRISTIAN?

Is the United States a Christian Nation? I am not asking if the majority of Americans today are evangelical Christians. I am not asking if the majority of Americans today share Christian values and live accordingly. I am not asking if our goals and accomplishments, our History, as a Nation have been Christian, at least most of the time. My answer to these questions would be probably or definitely not. This is not to say that America is not a great and wonderful Country. It is and I am proud and thankful to be an American, but it is not Christian by these standards. In answer to the original Question, many people refer to our Founders and the Founding Documents: the Declaration of Independence, the original 18th Century Constitution (understood according to "original intent") and the Bill of Rights. Are these documents Christian? No, they are not. Christ is not mentioned in them. And it is significant that the Founders did not want the Govt to establish or support any Christian Church and that candidates for elected Offices did not need to be Christian (there was to be no religious test at all for them). Officially, the United States is not a Christian Nation. But, those Founding Documents embody and codify Principles of Govt that are found in the Bible, ie- Principles that are ordained by God. Our Nation was originally built on those Biblical principles. We were officially designed and intended by the Founders to be a Nation that obeyed the Law of God and as long as we have those Founding Documents this is what we are officially and this is what we must always work at becoming in practice. A Summary of the argument for this Conclusion is in this Essay posted now on my website. Summary of Studies re Principles of Government as of 12-11 <http://www.reformedliving.org/>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:29

Saturday, November 26, 2011

POVERTY CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS

REVISED ESSAY: Biblical Basics about Poverty

If you are serious about helping the Poor, please read the rest of this Essay for the Biblical Solutions to Poverty. **Biblical Definition of Poverty: Destitution** In the media and according to self-appointed advocates of the poor, Poverty is living below an arbitrary level of income set by the Government. In our Society today, for most people, that definition defines which people are "Poor". That is not the correct definition of "Poverty" or "the Poor". Christians must define Poverty and Poor the way the Bible does. In the Bible, Poverty is defined as destitution. **Causes of true Poverty** The Book tells us there are more than 20 causes of Poverty altogether. 1. The Book of Proverbs says that personal, irresponsible behavior (mostly laziness) is a cause of poverty. This is the cause that conservative Evangelical Christians emphasize, almost exclusively (if you are poor you must be lazy). But this is only one cause of being poor. 2. Using the most common Biblical definition, people in America today are correctly called "poor" if they had property and means, but have lost their livelihood to no fault of their own or are no longer able to work and maintain their property. The Poor today are those who due to no fault of their own, can't pay their bills because of plant closings, fire, accident, death in the family, debilitating illness, enormous medical bills, etc. and, of course, natural disasters like tornadoes. The qualifying phrase, "due to no fault of their own" is crucial to the Biblical definition of the Poor. **Continue reading for the Biblical Solutions of Poverty**

http://www.reformedliving.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 10:13

Saturday, October 29, 2011

MOTHER TERESA IS WRONG: JESUS CAN NOT BE FOUND IN THE POOR

Again and again, I read or hear (as Mother Teresa is reported to have often said) that Jesus is in everyone and Christians are called to serve Him in them. This is usually said in reference to the Poor. The idea is based primarily on Matthew 25. This weekend it was used as the justification for the Church we attend to "Bless same-sex Marriages" (currently Clergy here are not allowed to perform same-gender weddings). The rationale behind the Resolution at the Annual Convention read, [this will enable us] "to seek Christ and to serve Christ in all persons". Sounds nice, but it is not true. Christ is not in all persons, whether they be poor, gay, rich or straight. I am re-posting the following study on Matthew 25. I first posted it February 12, 2008 on this Blog. Matthew 25:31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' 37 Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' 40 And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' This popular text is one of the most misunderstood and misused passages in the Bible. Mother Teresa and Ron Sider and a host of other Christians have it wrong. Here is how Ron Sider uses it-[Jesus] "warned his followers in the strongest possible words that those who do not feed the hungry, clothe the naked and visit prisoners will experience eternal damnation (Mat 25:31-46) - p.66 "Only as we feel the presence of [Jesus] in the form of a poor [man] can we understand his words: I was hungry and you gave me food ... (Mt 25:35-40) What does it mean to feed and clothe the Creator of all things? We can not know. We can only look at the poor ... with new eyes and resolve to heal their hurts and help end their oppression. Jesus saying (in Mat 25:45) is terrifying. "Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to the least of these, you did it not to me. What does that mean in a world where millions die each year while rich Christians live in affluence? What does it mean to see the Lord of the universe lying by the roadside starving and walk by on the other side. We cannot know. We can only pledge...not to kill him again."-p.69 Christ clearly taught that failure to feed the poor entails eternal damnation (Mt 25:45-46) -p.56 Jesus was even more blunt and sharp. To those who do not feed the hungry, clothe the naked and visit the prisoners, he will speak a terrifying word at the final Judgment: Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels (Mt 25:41) The meaning is clear and unambiguous. Jesus intends that his disciples imitate his own special concern for the poor and needy. Those who disobey will experience eternal damnation. - p.82The above are all quotes from Ron Sider's book, Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger (1st edition, 1977) That Christians are to care for those who are really poor (as the Bible defines "poor") is absolutely true; but this common use of Matthew 25, illustrated by Sider, is in error! I have written about this before, but the topic continues to pop up, so I will address it again. My References: Matthew, Evangelist and Teacher by RT France, Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew by Craig Keener, Matthew, a Commentary by Robert Gundry and many other scholars Matt 25:31-46 is a passage that asks and answers the Question: Who shall be saved? The entire Bible makes it clear that salvation is entirely a matter of grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Salvation is not based on our good works of any kind. The common interpretation of Matt 25:31-46 would lead us to believe that it is. Here is an overview of what the text does teach-1. There will be a Second Coming of Christ: the Son of Man is coming again in glory.v.31 Jesus said, 'When the Son of Man comes in his glory2. There is Judgment Day for all peoples. Jesus will be the Judge. When He comes in glory, all the billions of people who have ever lived on earth will be gathered before Him for His Judgment.v.31b then he will sit on the throne of his glory3. Jesus will divide the Peoples into two groups: Sheep and Goats.v.32 ... and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left.4. There is a Kingdom [Heaven]and there is a Hell. The latter is place of fire or punishment and that is eternal. Some go into the Kingdom and all others go to Hell. Which destiny is not determined by social activism or the lack thereof. The answer to the question: "What must I do to be saved" is not "Feed the Hungry"!v. 34 Then the king will say to those at his right hand, - [the Sheep] "Come, ... inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; v. 41 Then he will say to those at his left hand, "...depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; v. 46 And [the Goats people] will go away into eternal punishment, but the [Sheep people] into eternal life.'5. The Basis of Judgment is whether or not people love and serve Jesus Christ.v. 35 [to the Sheep:] for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." ...v. 42 [to the Goats:] for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me

clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me."6. How can people show they love and want to serve Christ? God did not create or intend Hell for people, but for the Devil and his angels. People are sent there by Christ because they did not care for the "least of his brothers". People who did care for the least of his brothers are saved and go into Heaven. By doing this they demonstrate that they love the Lord! v.40- "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me." v. 45 "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me."7. The crucial Question: who are "the least of these brothers of Jesus"? Are they the hungry, sick and homeless we might find on the streets of our cities? Are they all the people defined by our Government as the Poor? Is caring for them the way to our salvation? Will we go to Hell if we do not care for them? The "least brothers of Jesus" are Believers, particularly the Apostles and other disciples spreading the Gospel and suffering because of that. We learn this by considering how the relevant phrases from our passage are used in other places by Matthew. Matthew 18:6 But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. 14 In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost. Cf Lk 17:2, Mk 9:42 Matthew 10:42 And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward. cf Mk 9:41 I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward. cf Luke 8: 21 He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice." cf Mk 3:33, Matt 12:48 Matthew 25:40 "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' cf 28:10 Cf Mk 9:42, John 20:17 Matthew 18:3 And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven 5 And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. 6 But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. 10 See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. The hungry and naked (etc) in Matthew 25 are not the millions of people starving in Africa or anywhere else. First, Jesus Christ is not incarnate in the world's Poor. The Spirit of Christ indwells those (and only those) who have been justified by faith. Second, no one is related to Jesus, a brother or other member of his family, based on social-economic status. The brothers of Jesus are those who have been adopted by the Father on the basis that they are in union with His Son by their saving faith (Gal.3:26-4:7). They are those (only) who obey God's Word - not the millions who do not do that, rich or poor. The Brothers of Jesus who obey the great Commission often had to suffer great deprivation, hardship and imprisonment. Jesus warned the Apostles of that very thing. And of course, the experience of the Apostle Paul demonstrates it. This Passage (Matthew 25) is to encourage people to help such Brothers in their need. Many examples are found in Acts. Heb 10:32 Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. 33 Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. 34 You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. Those who refuse to help Brothers in need reveal that they are against Christ and the Gospel about Him. That being the case, they perish in Hell. cf 2 Thes 1:8, 2:10b, 1 Peter 4:1 Jesus had said, "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. 41 Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. -Matthew 10:40 cf 18:5 It is interesting that neither Sheep nor Goats knew that they were serving Jesus when they helped the Apostles or, on the other hand, were not serving Him when they refused to help the Apostles or other Christian workers. But they were. John 13:20 I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me." Luke 10:16 "He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me." cf Acts 9:1 and 4-5 When Saul persecuted the Church, he did not realize that he was persecuting Christ. That Jesus loves the poor (and the rich) is true. That Christians should love the poor (and the rich) is also true. However, it is error to identify Jesus with the Poor of the world. They are not His Body. Jesus does not indwell the Poor of the world; He definitely does indwell His Church. That is His Body. That we should make caring for suffering brothers and sisters in Christ, His Body, particularly those members who are suffering because they are working to spread the Gospel is the third major point of this text. That we serve Christ when we do this is the second point. That those who serve Christ go to Heaven is the first point of Matthew 25:31-46

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:09

Wednesday, September 28, 2011

WHEN TAXATION BECOMES THEFT

There is a lot of heated discussion these days about Government's involuntary redistribution of private wealth in the name of the common good. It comes under the Topic of Taxation. The Bible has something to say about this. Citizens are to willingly pay taxes to support a government that fulfills its God-given, righteous duties for the common good (See Romans 13:2-6, 1 Peter 2:13-17). However, if a Government arbitrarily seizes a citizen's property (including taxes) against his will for self-aggrandizing purposes (i.e.-in order to make itself more wealthy, larger and more powerful), it has sinned against that citizen and God. Scripture warns that sinning in this way is what Government inevitably shall do unless restrained and limited- See 1 Samuel 8:10-22 [Limited Government is a very fundamental Biblical Principle]. "Thou shalt not steal!" is the negative 8th Commandment (Exo.20:15). The positive converse of this command is "Thou shalt respect ownership!" This Command endorses and under-girds the concept of private property. It is usually taken as a warning to individuals, but the Scripture also applies it to Kings (Government). Again, Government has no right to arbitrarily seize a citizen's property (including taxes) against his will for self-aggrandizing purposes (i.e.-in order to make itself more wealthy, larger and more powerful), That breaks the 8th commandment! A story in the Bible reveals how evil this sin is and how seriously God takes it, judging by the terrible consequences when it happened to Ahab and Jezebel in the story of Naboth's Vineyard that began in 1 Kings 21. It is one of the most violent and gruesome stories in the Bible.1 Now Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel, beside the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. 2 And after this Ahab said to Naboth, "Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near my house, and I will give you a better vineyard for it; or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its value in money." 3 But Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers." 4 And Ahab went into his house vexed and sullen because of what Naboth the Jezreelite had said to him, for he had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." And he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and would eat no food. 5 But Jezebel his wife came to him and said to him, "Why is your spirit so vexed that you eat no food?" 6 And he said to her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money, or else, if it please you, I will give you another vineyard for it.' And he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'" 7 And Jezebel his wife said to him, "Do you now govern Israel? Arise and eat bread and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite." [and to do that, she had Naboth murdered!]17 Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 18 "Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, ... he is in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone to take possession. 19 And you shall say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, "Have you killed and also taken possession?"' And you shall say to him, 'Thus says the LORD: "In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick your own blood." 20 [Elijah the prophet said to Ahab] because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the LORD. 21 Behold, [He] will bring disaster upon you.[And God punished Jezebel, too. The next King, Jehu, ordered his servants to throw her off her balcony] 33 ... So they threw her down; some of her blood spattered on the wall and on the horses, which trampled on her. 35 ... when they went to bury her, they found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands. 36 Elijah said, " the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel; 37 the corpse of Jezebel shall be like dung ...Kings beware, do not steal from your subjects or God will get very, very angry!!

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 20:43

Friday, September 23. 2011

IS CAPITAL PUNISHMENT UNSCRIPTURAL? UNCHRISTIAN?

Many Evangelicals say they are not Theonomists. They believe that Salvation and the Christian life is all about grace and grace alone. To apply the Law of Moses to life situations today would be legalistic, even unchristian. However, in practice we can not help but go to the Law on many subjects, e.g.- Marriage and Abortion. When we do this we are being Theonomists! That is ok! We can and should do that. God never repealed His Law. Jesus himself said this. (Matt 5:17-20) When Paul said Christ is the end of the Law (Rom 10:4) he was teaching we are saved by grace alone, apart from the Law. Absolutely! The Law is not the way to Salvation, but it remains the way God expects people to live their lives! The Commands forbidding stealing, bearing false witness and murder are still in effect. All this is to say that Capital Punishment for murder in the first degree is commanded and sanctioned by the Law of God. Yes, there are terrible faults in our legal system and innocent people have been wrongly sentenced to death (and to other punishments as well). A man admittedly guilty of intentionally killing another man was executed this week in Texas. There were no doubts about his guilt. The system worked. There was another man executed in Georgia this week for murder but there were many doubts about both his trial and guilt. From what I can see, his execution was a miscarriage of Justice- the system not working. He should have been allowed to have another Trial. Such a miscarriage does not justify jettisoning the Law or Capital Punishment itself or the obligation and right of the State to execute it. The latter is not, by definition, "murder". What about mercy? There is a big difference between guilt and punishment. God can forgive the former, but forgiven sinners still must face the consequences of their acts. Being released from guilt is not the same as being released from penalty. What about the value of life? What about it? This question always implies that execution by the State denies that value. No, murder does! Far from denying the value of human life, the most severe penalty possible is given by the State to someone who intentionally takes such a life. This is done specifically in order to teach Society the value of human life and to help preserve it.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 10:18

Monday, September 5, 2011

WILL THE WORLD'S WOES EVER CEASE? WHEN?

Struggling Economy, Unemployment, Natural Disasters week after week across the Land. But, in spite of current woes and protestations to the contrary, contemporary younger Christians seem to have an abiding belief in the goodness of human beings and of Government. They have a strong faith that progress for Humanity is possible and will be made to overcome the troubles of the World. This faith and confidence is not based in Scripture. The End Times will be very different.

Those of us who acknowledge the sinfulness of human beings and the reality of Evil who hold on to the hope that current woes will lead people to seek God in their troubles are flying in the face of what the Bible says about human nature. With an occasional exception, tough times and suffering do not normally lead human beings to repent of their sins and turn to God for mercy. It has led many people to call on the Lord for help during their time of trial, but that is not really repenting of sin and seeking salvation of one's soul. At any rate, such people usually lose interest in God after their crisis has passed.

Revelation 16 describes far worse times than what we are seeing now, and yet look how people will respond- v.10 ... People gnawed their tongues in anguish 11 and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds. Likewise, v.18 And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been since man was on the earth, so great was that earthquake. 19 The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, 20 And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found. 21 And great hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, fell from heaven on people; and they cursed God for the plague of the hail, because the plague was so severe. Many things do change and there is relative progress for Humanity in some ways, but History as we know it does not end well. Regardless of any progress made to eliminate world poverty and warfare, Nations will not turn to God. Humanity as a whole will not repent of its sins against the Lord. Read the 18th chapter of Revelation. "Babylon" is world-wide hedonistic, materialistic Civilization. Because that is Idolatrous, it will eventually be destroyed. Read chapter 19 about the Coming of the Rider on the White Horse and the End Times as they shall actually be! The Kingdom of God on earth shall appear only after Christ returns in Glory. Bad News! Good News!

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 09:22

Sunday, August 14, 2011

IS AMERICA A CHRISTIAN OR A BIBLICAL NATION? Part 2

All Political Theories are ultimately based on Ideology or Philosophy. There is one exception: For the Biblical Christian, Political Theory begins with Theology. It does not begin with Secular Ideology or Secular Philosophy. And Theology begins with "Theo", with God. And the ultimate Truth about God is that He is Sovereign. All authority in heaven and earth belongs to God. The Kingdom and the power and the glory all belong to Him. God is involved with everything that happens and controls it according to His will and purposes which nothing can derail. This Doctrine that God is Sovereign has great fundamental consequences for Political Theory. It means no Government is sovereign. It means the People are not sovereign. "Government of the people, for the people and by the people" is not a Biblical concept. Government is of God, He ordained it. Government is for God, it exists to serve Him on earth. We start here in developing Political Theory and practice. Read the rest of this Essay on my website

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 22:08

Thursday, August 4, 2011

MAKING MONEY

"Biblically informed Christians will support "private property" and the ideal of free market Capitalism (as defined earlier), rather than collective or government ownership of the means of production and distribution of goods. There is no such thing as truly free market Capitalism. America has a mixed economy. It comes down to degrees and compromise; but, Biblical Christians will be very reluctant about supporting government interference in economic affairs beyond the amount necessary for Justice. They will resist coerced redistribution of economic wealth. (What that means in actual practice will be debated.)"God expects intentional effort to increase personal wealth. See the parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30), but there is no doubt that unlimited growth and the accumulation of wealth is a problem. Biblical Christians are realists about human nature and the evils which that can cause in any economy. The safeguards in the Law of God given to Israel, designed to prevent or at least limit the accumulation of wealth, private or corporate, when it comes at the cost of economic injustice, apply to Christians today."
from my article principles-of-economics-part-6

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:48

Wednesday, July 27, 2011

BIBLICAL BASICS Re. CIVIL GOVERNEMENT

Summary of Civil Government based on Biblical Principles Government is not to establish (support and control) organized Religion (ie- a Church) Government is not responsible for the welfare and the care of the sick, the widowed and orphaned, the unemployed and the homeless. Government may provide an educational system for its citizens but it must not usurp or undermine parental responsibilities in teaching moral and ethical values to their children or in any way act in loco parentis in the lives of their children against the will of their actual parents. Government is not to be involved with Labor and the research & development, production and distribution of goods and services (ie- in matters of Business and Commerce); Communication, Media, the Arts or Recreation.

Government must function under, and be limited by, the Constitution and Law (and specific laws must be in harmony with the principles of Biblical Law),

The only legitimate, God-given responsibilities for Civil Government are enactment and enforcement of the Law and the maintenance of Courts and a Justice system guaranteeing the full and fair treatment of all citizens as spelled out under the Law. The Government's responsibility is to maintain peace and to protect its citizens (and the Nation) from injustice, physical harm and danger from any quarter. The latter includes maintaining and using Armed Forces for that purpose. Taxing the people for these services is not theft. It is the obligation of citizens to pay for them. Government of a Nation is to be respected and obeyed by all who live in the Nation, but not trusted. It must be strictly limited. There must be a clear and equal division of governmental powers, wherein there will always be an internal system of checks and balances to inhibit any part of the Government (or those who run it) from overstepping its limits and become tyrannical or oppressive of its citizens and all others who live within its borders. Scripture also teaches that there is a contract or covenant between those who govern and those who are governed. This means Civil Government is elected by the citizens and requires their consent through their Representatives for its policies. The People have a right to expect the Government to fulfill its obligations under the Law. In turn, the Government has the right to require obedience, support and taxes from the Citizens. But it also means the governed have a right to rebel against the Government when the contract between them and the Government has been broken. Note: "Government" does not mean political Parties nor a Bureaucracy of Federal appointees and employees and myriads of Regulations. "Government" refers to elected officials and the constitutional structure in which they function.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 21:12

Saturday, June 11, 2011

THERE IS ONE GOD AND HIS NAME IS JEHOVAH

God's preferred name is indicated by the 4 letters YHWH (Genesis 3:13-18). It is the Hebrew verb "to be". There are no vowels but from ancient times the vowels "a" and "e" have been supplied to make the name "Yahweh" which eventually morphed into "Jehovah". When the title of "Lord" [Hebrew- Adonai] is capitalized it means "Jehovah" [YHWH]. God's preferred Name is Jehovah, meaning the "One who is" or simply "I am". God is Life itself. He is the origin and essential nature of Being or Reality. Paul said, In Him we [all] live and move and have our being.- Acts 17:28 of Isaiah 42:5 God, the LORD, who... spread out the earth ... gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in itThe "I am" is the Triune God of Christianity. Specifically, "God" is the God who is revealed and known in the person of Jesus Christ. This past week there was an Ecumenical and Inter-Faith Prayer Service held at the Episcopal Cathedral here in Springfield on behalf of this Tornado ravaged City and those who are suffering from its devastation. There were a number of Mainline Clergy including Unitarians as well as two Muslim Imams, a Rabbi and a Buddhist monk. The writer of the newspaper articles wrote of the many ways that the participants prayed to the "Divine" (her word). A Pastor of a local United Church of Christ addressed her prayer to "the One God of many Names- Yaweh, Allah, Loving Creator, Source of Strength, and Shelter from the Storm". Two Black Baptist Pastors took part, but no White or Hispanic Evangelical Pastors were mentioned as participants. I would not have been there because such a gathering fosters the very popular Error that there is only one "God" and He or She or It is the same for all Religions- that all religious people worship and pray to the same "God". Well, it is true there is only one God, but He is the Triune God of Christianity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit. This one God manifest in 3 Persons is the LORD. None other! The popular Error which was the basis of the Prayer Service obscures or denies this Truth. Paul wrote, "We know that there is no God but one. For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth--as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"-- yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist". -1 Cor 8:4-6The Apostle Peter said, There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other Name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.-Acts 4:12And the Great Commission is Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, -Matt 28:19All that being said, Christians most definitely need to be in prayer for the peoples here and around the world that are being pummeled and buffeted right and left by the forces of Nature, not only for their healing but that they get right with the One True God who is the Creator of Water, Wind and Fire. These disasters remind us of how puny we are and how dependent we are on His Mercy and Grace.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:00

Friday, May 27. 2011

LEARNING ABOUT THE END TIMES

If last week's media coverage about the Rapture made you curious to learn more about the End Times (it should have) than here are a few articles from CT that could be helpful to you-
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/lyris/ctlibrary/archives/05-26-2011.html>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:37

Saturday, May 21. 2011

THERE WILL BE A SECOND COMING OF CHRIST, BUT-

Matthew 24:3 As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?" [Jesus answered-]14 This gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. 21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. 29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. 33 So, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates.

World-wide evangelism accomplished

Tribulation (world-wide persecution) of the Church

Calamity in the sky, announcing the

Appearance of Christ in all his glory and seen in the sky by all around the globe

Trumpet blast and the in-gathering of all the Church

36 "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 10:38

Thursday, May 19, 2011

JESUS IS COMING AGAIN- this Saturday?

Newt Gingrich is having difficulty getting his bid for the Presidency off the ground and our former Governor, Mitt Romney, is under fire for his bid. Both men are being severely criticized by members of their own Party and Conservatives whom they each hope will support them. Another Republican, John Huntsman Jr, hits the New Hampshire ground today. I wonder what would happen if Jesus decided to enter the race. I know he never would, the huge amount of money needed would alone be a big problem for him (although many of his American followers today are multimillionaires). No, I am wondering if he would be criticized like these other would-be candidates are. Would he be the butt of jokes like Sarah Palin was and still is? Would "birthers" question how when and where he was born? Would some people try to dig up dirt from his personal life of 30 years as a bachelor? And of course, he has often been in trouble with the Authorities and his circle of friends is very suspect. But I am sure Jesus can (and will) handle all those who ridicule him or say nasty things about him (and the cartoons!) A man named Harold Camping, according to today's newspaper, is predicting that the Rapture will happen this Saturday and apparently many people around the world believe him (that is why it is in the news) Of course, many are ridiculing him and his followers. No, Jesus is not going to run for President of the United States- he already has a far more important and more powerful job as the Sovereign of the World. But Jesus will come again in Glory and Judge the world. It could be this week, but it could also be a long time off (it is always "imminent"). But it shall happen (with or without the Rapture). I'm sure you would be laughed at by many of your friends if you told them you believed this (You do, don't you? It has been orthodox Christian dogma for 2000 years) Jesus himself predicted it and also taught us to pray for it every day ("Thy Kingdom come") The churches I grew up with preached the Second Coming (with a Rapture) all the time. I almost never hear about it any more. We are not afraid of ridicule are we?

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:36

Saturday, May 7, 2011

A BETTER "NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER" (than the one we just observed)

Every year when the National Day of Prayer rolls around, the go-to Bible text most often used in this one-2 Chronicles 7:14 ... if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. God's Promise is made to Ancient Israel, not America. The United States of America is not ""My People" who are called by God's Name. BUT the Church is the New Israel (Gal 1:16 cf 1 Peter 2:4-10) Therefore, the Promise in 2 Chronicles 7:14 is actually addressed to it. Notice it has 2 parts. God promises to forgive Israel's sin and heal their Land [where they live] IF they meet a 2-fold condition: the People of God [the Church, not America] must humble themselves before God AND turn from their wicked ways. Only then! I do not think that is what many (most?) people who observe the National Day of Prayer have in mind. They do not turn from their sins. They usually simply desire (a nameless, generic, interfaith) God's blessing upon America. Conservatives may pray Liberal Leaders will repent of their political agendas. Many may pray for the President and Congress to do what ever is right for the Nation and also for our Troops in harm's way to be safe and come home soon. They may pray that the national Economy will get better and unemployment will go down. Surely all that is good. I pray about such matters every day, but it is not what 2 Chronicles is calling for. The one verse that comes to mind that commands Christians to pray for "all who are in high places" is this one- 1 Timothy 2:1-3 ... I [Apostle Paul] urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior...A "Day of Prayer" based on this text would have a very specific focus. There is nothing here about current events. Instead, it is a prayer, in effect, that the original intent of the First Amendment be honored. Period. Again, not what most people who promote the National Day of Prayer have in mind. The First Amendment reads in part- Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; ...All the Amendments were intended to limit the power of the Federal Government. This particular Amendment is about forbidding Congress from getting involved or meddling with Religion (and by "Religion" the Founders and most citizens of the times (circa 1791) typically meant the Protestant Christian Faith, but not any specific Denomination), leaving it alone so that we Christians (the Church) may, in the words of Paul, "lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior..." I wonder what the effect would be on America if folks who participate in the National Day of Prayer would earnestly pray according to either 2 Chronicles 7:14 or 1 Timothy 2:1-3?

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 21:45

Wednesday, March 30, 2011

NEW: GOD AND THE NATIONS- Part 1 and 2

"Nations" in this paper will mean "States", geo-political entities, a people sharing a a single political and territorial identity. It may well also be a union of peoples with different ethnicities and cultures and languages. Many Nations in the Bible share many of the characteristics of States. The latter is usually what the most common word for "Nation" (GOY) means in the Bible. It applies to Israel and the "Nations" around them such as Egypt and Assyria, i.e.-they were all geo-political entities. They were ruled by Kings or Emperors. (There were no modern Nation-States or Democracies in the Bible. The type of Government is irrelevant to the definition.)[Note: a Study of Greek and Hebrew words for "Nations" is appended to this Essay]God judges Nations today and does so on the singular basis of His Law, as summarized in the Decalogue and as it is revealed to all by Natural Law.
<http://www.reformedliving.org/>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 16:25

Tuesday, March 29. 2011

WILL AMERICA BE RETURNING TO THE WILDERNESS OF GEN 1:1

Creation is about God turning wilderness [TOHU] into fertile land to be inhabited and good for human beings. The "Cultural Mandate" is the Comission God gave to Humanity to continue God's creational work, developing the wilderness into Civilization for Humanity (Gen.1:26-28) But a corrupt Civilization will return to the Wilderness.

SEE THE REST OF THIS NEW ARTICLE ON MY WEBSITE

<http://www.reformedliving.org/index>.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 19:36

Monday, March 21. 2011

MARRIAGE AS GOD INTENDED

What God had in mind for Marriage (what Marriage is supposed to be) Gen 2:15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." [in cultivating the Garden] 20 ...But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. [and work together as equal partners] And then there is the matter of having babies: What God had in mind is this-

Gen 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion. But this is how it is for many today in America- "In 2007, nearly 60 percent of 20-to-25-year-old women who gave birth were unmarried, as were 45 percent of women who gave birth in their 20s overall. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 40 percent of American births in 2008 were to unmarried women. [Somehow] ... those trends ... reflect how much our culture values marriage itself [!] says Barbara Katz Rothman, a professor of sociology at the City University of New York. In the not-so-distant past, she says, the institution of marriage was based largely on economics: a way to produce children to work the farm, consolidate landholdings, further the family business. Marriages of the 1950s and '60s might be glorified today, but for women who wanted children, they were also a financial necessity. These days, marriage is more idealized: It's supposed to be a union of soulmates, a relationship that trumps all others". [emphasis added] http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/

According to this article, Marriage is no longer for children or financial security [or to fulfill the Cultural Mandate] It is simply about the union of two people for their mutual satisfaction. Period!

What do you think The Original Match Maker thinks about how His Plan is looked at "these days"?

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 23:42

WHERE DOES GOD WANT PEOPLE TO LIVE?

Gen 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion... [The Cultural Mandate] Gen 8:15 [After surviving the Flood] God said to Noah, 16 "Go out from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. 17 Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh--birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth--that they may swarm on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth." Gen 9:1 God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Gen 10:5 From these the... peoples spread in their lands, each with his own language, by their clans, in their nations. 32 These are the clans of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, in their nations, and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood. BUT -Gen 11:1 [eventually] the whole earth had one language and the same words. 2 And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. 3 And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. 4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth." 5 And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. 6 And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. 7 Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another's speech." 8 So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. 9 Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth. These texts reveal one major reason for many so-called natural disasters. It is the stubborn refusal of multitudes of people and people groups to follow God's plan to disperse and fill the entire earth for His Glory. The human insistence on congregating in mega-masses on sea coasts is against God's will and contributes greatly to the sorrows Humanity continues to experience- the price for their disobedience. Here is a very interesting article with maps to illustrate the connection between the geography and demographics of a nation and the economic well being of that Nation. The USA is exceptionally blessed in this regard (Japan on the other hand is not).

Blog Export: DUTCH TREAT- Cal Fox's Blog, <http://www.calvinfox.com/blog/>

http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20090602_geography_recession?utm_source

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 13:41

Monday, March 14. 2011

NEW: BIBLICAL JUSTICE

I have just posted a new 4-part study of Biblical Justice on my website:

Isaiah 30:18- the LORD is a God of justice; Isaiah 61:8- I, the LORD, love justice ; Isaiah 28:17 I will make justice the measuring line.

Justice has top priority with God. Therefore, Justice must be our top priority. God judges a "King" (an Administration), a Nation, a People on their record and practice of Justice. What is "Justice"?

<http://www.reformedliving.org/index.php>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 10:08

Saturday, March 12. 2011

WHEN IS SOMETHING "BIBLICAL" NOT REALLY BIBLICAL

Congress claims that the Fed Govt requiring private companies to provide Health Insurance for all employees is constitutional. Among other problems, doing that requires allowing pre-existing medical issues to be covered, which many find objectionable (out of concern that people would wait until they are sick before buying the insurance.) Congress claims that unconditional blanket coverage is necessary to make the alleged constitutional mandate for universal coverage work therefore, coverage of pre-existing conditions (which is not in the Constitutional) constitutional. This Question clarifies the issue: Would the fact [if true] that Congress has the constitutional power to do X - say, guarantee universal access to insurance - make Y [coverage of pre-existing conditions which is not mentioned in the Constitution] constitutional, merely because Y is necessary for doing X? George Will says "no" and Conservatives will agree with him.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/03/>

This problem of Logic raises these Questions for Christians:

What is mandated by the Bible that requires something not mandated in order to obey the Mandate? and Does that make the second thing itself Biblical? The 3 Big Bible Mandates:

1. Cultivation of the Earth
2. Love of God & Neighbor
3. Make Disciples of Believers
Contingencies to each Mandate:
1. Education Science, Technology- infrastructure, medical care, housing etc, etc
2. Economic, Political, Legal systems- everything that goes into creating a just Society
3. Bible Schools, Missionary Agencies, Fund Raising, etc
None of these contingencies are mandated by the Bible but they are arguably essential to obeying the Commands that are in the Bible. Does the latter mean all these contingencies then are Biblical? And and what about they many, many sub-topics of each? All Biblical, too? Reasonable Christians will agree they are not Biblical as such across the board. Each particular sub-topic must be judged on its own merits as to whether it does indeed fulfill the Mandate in Question. And doing that will often lead to yet another problem of where to draw the line. If we are not careful, eventually all kinds of very tangential, peripheral matters will be given the imprimature of "Biblical" when they are far from that. This is often the source of serious error and divisions among us.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:22

Wednesday, March 9, 2011

WHY GET MARRIED? WHY HAVE CHILDREN?

"In 2007, nearly 60 percent of 20-to-25-year-old women who gave birth were unmarried, as were 45 percent of women who gave birth in their 20s overall. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 40 percent of American births in 2008 were to unmarried women. ... those trends ... reflect how much our culture values marriage itself, says Barbara Katz Rothman, a professor of sociology at the City University of New York. In the not-so-distant past, she says, the institution of marriage was based largely on economics: a way to produce children to work the farm, consolidate landholdings, further the family business. Marriages of the 1950s and '60s might be glorified today, but for women who wanted children, they were also a financial necessity. These days, marriage is more idealized: It's supposed to be a union of soul mates, a relationship that trumps all others".
http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/

According to this article, Marriage is no longer for children or financial security. It is simply about the union of two people for their mutual satisfaction. And having children is increasingly separate from marriage. It is for those women [and men?] who simply want to have a child, presumably after their career has been established and they are financially able to provide for a child (such as the heralded case this week of Natalie Portman). Significantly, working against this trend is the fact that most of the babies born to single women do not have careers or affluence- [According to the CDCP] "Hispanic and black women have the most births outside of marriage, as do women in their 20s in general. Economics is... a driving force ... for lower-income women who are forgoing marriage. Unemployment rates for black and Hispanic men are high, she says. And if those men seem to be undesirable husbands, the women are more likely, and able, to manage on their own. [and they] want to be mothers ...". Many young, urban Evangelicals buy into the idea that Marriage is simply about the union of two people for their mutual satisfaction and not necessarily connected with having children. (Be mindful that if this definition is acceptable, there is no argument against "Gay Marriage") Many young, urban Evangelicals also buy into the goals and lifestyles of upwardly mobile professionals and that includes putting off having children until convenient for them. The most basic article of faith for an "Evangelical" is that the Bible is the authority for how they live. That Authority says Marriage is instituted by God Himself and that the purpose for Marriage is to enable a man and a woman to be co-laborers in fulfilling the Cultural Mandate. That, in turn, requires them to have children (if and when God gifts them to the married couple) and spread out around the globe on their mission. Gen. 1:26 God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion "The Fall" and Sin cripples this effort, but through Redemption in Christ and with the power of the Holy Spirit, under the guidance of both Natural and Special Revelation and with the use of both Common Grace and Special Grace, obeying this Mandate is possible for Christians.

See my Essay on Biblical Marriage-

[http://www.reformedliving.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=210:](http://www.reformedliving.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=210)

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 20:29

Thursday, February 24, 2011

THE ADVENTURE OF SENTENCE DIAGRAMMING

from an excellent review of "How to Write a Sentence" by Stanley Fish-
<http://tgcreviews.com/reviews/how-to-write-a-sentence/>"Unlike most teachers and writers of grammars, Fish neither surveys the parts of speech nor regales us with a list of dos and don'ts; instead, he provides us with a clear, concise definition of what a sentence is: "a structure of logical relationships." His reason for doing so is both theoretical and practical: "Technical knowledge, divorced from what it is supposed to be knowledge of, yields only the illusion of understanding." Merely memorizing the difference between subjects and objects or the rules for semi-colon usage won't do us any good, and may even lead us astray, if we have not first grappled with sentences as sentences. "...the oddest thing about Fish's book is that the advice he gives is not all that different from the approach taken by the most conservative, dyed-in-the-wool writing teachers—diagramming sentences. Though ... Fish himself never once references the discipline. As Fish is a prodigiously savvy writer, I can only assume that his refusal to use the phrase "diagramming sentences," when that is exactly what he spends the bulk of his book doing, is done for a very specific purpose: to coax readers with an aversion to diagramming sentences into seeing that the unpacking of a sentence's syntax (the way the words and phrases are arranged) can be a truly exciting adventure."
I agree. No one should attempt Bible Study without knowing how to diagram sentences! - CF

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 13:53

Thursday, February 17, 2011

THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF REVELATION RIDING TODAY

from my study of the book of Revelation, chap.6-

Let us take a closer look at the Seals. We see four horses and their riders. "Come" is addressed to each of them. We start with the second (v.3) horse, colored red for "blood". Its rider instigates violence, bloodshed and war on the earth. These are given in History, constant around the globe, in our cities, everywhere. The third, black, horse and rider spread economic injustice, famine and starvation around the world (v.5-6). As Jesus foretold, devastating poverty will always be with us. The fourth seal reminds us of the pale horse of death, whose rider always follows the previous horsemen. Violence, war, and poverty lead to famine, disease and gray corpses. The fifth seal (v.9) reveals persecution of the Church, people being killed for their faith. Currently, 200 million around the world are suffering because they are Christians. More people suffered for Christ during the 20th Century than in the previous 19 centuries combined. The Tribulation is not only future, it always has been and is now, in some parts of the world.

The sixth seal reveals an ever increasing number of "natural" disasters, such as- hurricanes, tsunamis, floods, earthquakes and erupting volcanoes (v.12) Notice something very important and amazing about all of these seals- these phenomena that we call "evil". Reread what is said of each. They all come from Christ. He calls them to come. He gives them their power. This does not necessarily mean that Christ caused them all directly. It does mean that they exist by His permission and that they all serve His purposes.. This also means that, though they seem all powerful and interminable when they happen, they are in fact limited and temporary. As we must keep insisting, Christ is the Lord of History. He is Sovereign. On a personal level, this means nothing, absolutely nothing, comes into your life each day that does not first pass by the Throne of God.

Now we return to the first horse (v.1-2) What is this white stallion? Who is its rider? A common interpretation is that the horse and rider symbolize Imperialism. Look more closely. The rider wears a crown and rides to conquer. Now look at chapter 19:11-13. Here, too, is a white horse and a rider wearing a crown. No question who this is. He is the Risen Christ. The Word of God. This means that the rider in Chapter 5 could also be Christ. Indeed, Christ is said to be a conqueror in 3:21 and 5:3. The reference there is to His victory over sin and death at the cross and tomb. But there is also 17:14. The entire Book of Revelation is about cosmic conflict: Christ versus Satan.

http://www.reformedliving.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:49

BEWARE THE TOTALITARIAN STATE

More from my study of the Book of Revelation-

http://www.reformedliving.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=

As Chapter 13 opens, the red dragon, Satan, is seen standing on the shore of the sea. There appears a Beast coming out of the sea and Satan gives his power to this beast (v.6) In turn, it exercises authority over all peoples and nations around the world (v.7) This must be understood. Satan, the Enemy of Christ and His Church, incarnates himself in a system of Civil Government, a totalitarian System. The Beast coming out of the Sea is Totalitarian Civil Government. Sure, there will be a titular Head of that Government, but it is the System itself that we must be concerned about. Satan is embedded in the System, controlling and using the system to war against Christ and His Church.

Evangelical Christians rightfully promote a personal Savior for personal sins; but we must also accept the reality of systemic Sin and systemic Redemption. We like to champion individual freedom, but we certainly know that we have little of it and most of our lives are controlled by systems. Besides civil government and bureaucracies on all levels and in all aspects of our lives, we must deal with legal, health, education and business systems. Street gangs, sports teams, families and churches are systems. Systems have more than organization, they are dynamic. Each part or member interacts with the other, impacting and changing, over time, all the members. Indeed, systems take on lives of their own and gradually control their members. Instead of serving us, we serve them. Civil Government Bureaucracies are obvious examples of that, but so are typical weddings. It is obviously good strategy for Satan to use systems to wage war against Christ. By ignoring the reality that Satan invades and uses social and corporate systems and structures to accomplish Evil, we allow Satan free-rein in them. Instead, we are to oppose systemic evil and work for the redemption of social systems and structures. Christ is not Lord if He can be excluded from them. When Christians deny this concept and mandate, they aide and abet the Enemy in his efforts to prevent Christ from Ruling the Nations. Remember Ephesians 1:20- [God] raised Christ from death and let him sit at his right side in heaven. 21 There, Christ rules over all forces, authorities, powers, and rulers. We are to raise His Banner over all of them. If Christ is to be Lord of our lives,

He, not Satan, must be Lord of the systems that seek to control our lives. This sets us up for a life of daily conflict. Most Christians, like non-Christians, prefer to avoid conflict. They prefer a life of comfort and "peace". "Not making waves" is one of their most important values, but here is no way honest Christians can live in this world and avoid conflict with sin and evil. In fact, we are called to it, our cross. It is how we best imitate Christ— the essential nature of discipleship. 13:5 [The Beast] opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name ... 7 Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them... We dare not keep our heads in the sand: We have an Enemy who will not quit. This enemy hates God and everything we hold dear as Christians. To the degree that this Enemy controls Civil Government (the beast from the Sea), the State hates God and opposes Him. Governments per se are not evil; but neither are they neutral. (Absolutely nothing is neutral) God created Government to be His servant. It has a God-given mandate to maintain Justice in society. But instead, all government can become the Beast from the Sea, an instrument of Satan and evil. [See my study notes re Government on my website]

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:39

CAN CHRISTIANS DEMONSTRATE AGAINST GOV'T?

Totalitarian Government is Government that takes the place of God in people's lives. They learn to trust it, obey it and depend totally on it. The State becomes a god, whom people worship as almighty. Whenever there is a problem, "take it to Jesus, uuh, I mean, take it to the State". The State will protect us, feed us, house us, educate us and heal us. In turn, we will die for the State if need be. This arrangement serves the schemes of Satan. It successfully usurps the Risen Christ's rightful place as Sovereign. In fact, such a government is Anti-Christ. Those who take this possibility seriously are always suspicious of Government, Left or Right. They will appreciate its role in preserving law and order in a society of sinful human beings, but will resist its encroachment into any other area of our lives beyond that basic function. This is at the heart of the philosophical differences between "Conservatives" and "Liberals". The Christian will obey any Government under God. He will not obey any Government that claims to be God. However, such a Christian will not overthrow the Government nor become an anarchist. Rather he submits for conscience sake and says, Rev. 13:10 If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

A Christian is not an anarchist. S/he believes God has instituted civil government [see my notes on that topic on this website] Government is necessary and is meant to serve God. However, owing supreme loyalty to God and His Regent, Christ, the Christian has the responsibility to be a loyal critic of a particular government's administration and policies. The Christian must never equate any human leaders with God and must always ask if specific policies and laws are serving God, pursuing His will on earth as it is in heaven. When the State we live under falls short, seeking to be God in our lives and insisting that we obey its dictates when they transgress the Law of the True God, we must agree with Apostles Peter and John-Acts 5:29 We must obey God rather than men and accept the consequences. Historically, when Christians have walked such talk, the Kingdom has made great progress in the world. The above paragraphs are excerpts from my study of the Book of Revelation http://www.reformedliving.org/index.php?option=com_content&view

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:30

THE TURING TEST: MIND vs MACHINE

Here are excerpts from a fascinating article about the annual Turing Test which pits a human against a computer. The author took part in last years Test and it raised serious questions for him (and us) as to what it means to be human.- <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/03/mind-vs-machine/8386/2/>"In the race to build computers that can think like humans, the proving ground is the Turing Test—an annual battle between the world's most advanced artificial-intelligence programs and ordinary people. The objective? To find out whether a computer can act "more human" than a person. In his own quest to beat the machines, the author discovers that the march of technology isn't just changing how we live, it's raising new questions about what it means to be human. Philosophers, psychologists, and scientists have been puzzling over the essential definition of human uniqueness since the beginning of recorded history. The Harvard psychologist Daniel Gilbert says that every psychologist must, at some point in his or her career, write a version of what he calls "The Sentence." Specifically, The Sentence reads like this: The human being is the only animal that _____. The story of humans' sense of self is, you might say, the story of failed, debunked versions of The Sentence."

The Atlantic writer obviously did not read the article I posted yesterday (below) about what it means to be human. Even

if he had, he would most likely not have been impressed because what I wrote rests upon an external authority- the Bible. Doing that always creates an impasse in the discussion of any subject with most people. Traditional Protestants hold that Sola Scriptura is the Formal Principle, i.e.- that which forms our perspective on all other Doctrines. The latter are considered the Material Principle. Many Christians are content using this distinction with Doctrines having to do with Soteriology (Salvation) and maybe in matters of Ecclesiology (Church) But to be consistent, the Formal Principle must also apply to Moral or Ethical topics (eg Abortion and Euthanasia) and it must apply to all other Academic subjects. Often this is not done by defenders of Sola Scriptura, especially when the Subject is Science. This is a rejection of the Formal Principle. And that is inexcusable for anyone who claims to be a Protestant, let alone a Reformed Christian.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:02

Wednesday, February 16, 2011

ELEMENTARY, DEAR WATSON, YOU ARE NOT HUMAN

I have read several articles lately about the on-going development of Artificial Intelligent (AI), Robotics and whether robots will ever become "humans". Last night we watched the amazing performance by "Watson", the IBM computer, on the Jeopardy quiz show.

http://voices.washingtonpost.com/fasterforward/2011/02/watson_runs_off_with_the_first.html

http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/41632537/ns/technology_and_science-innovation/

We have had "bionic" humans for some time (people with artificial parts or prostheses) Cyborgs (beings that are some part human and part machine) are a reality. Will there be human looking automatons (independent programmed machines) doing the work of humans in offices and factories soon? Will Androids (machines that are virtual humans) become a reality in our life time? Interesting questions!

Can a computer with AI, no matter what "body" it may have, be "human"? Absolutely not! For many years, there have been those who believe human beings are nothing more than plumbing and wiring. For them, the answer is "Highly probable in time". Dealing with matters such as emotions is a problem. "Plumbing" of course refers to physical, biological organs and functions. Cybernetics is the study of the closed loop control systems and has been applied to understanding human and bodily functions via the brain and nervous system. Together, human behavior, according to these Theorists, is totally explained by wiring and plumbing and can probably be successfully duplicated or imitated. "Watson" is actually This topic became a "hot" one in the late 1960's Wiring and plumbing are real, of course, and important, but they are not part of the Image. The Image instead includes the faculties of rationality, creativity, morality, spirituality and communality. All require free-will, decision making and accountability- a sense and awareness of "Self". This is what gives each of us infinite and unique value vis-a-vis everything else. "Watson" does not have these faculties and never will. We do!

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:48

Monday, February 14, 2011

GOVERNMENT UNDER LAW IS A HALF-TRUTH

The motto: "No one is above the Law" is a half-truth. The Law today may well be determined by Congress or Legislature or by the Supreme Court (if not the Law itself, the interpretation of it that is applied). That Law may be good or bad. The Biblical principle is that no one is above the Law of God.

When individuals are sovereign, as in Libertarianism, all values are relative- they are individual values. The complete freedom of individuals (the philosophy of laissez-faire) is not a Scriptural or Christian value. When the State is sovereign there may be social stability, but that, too, is not a Scriptural or Christian value. In fact, true freedom and social stability are possible only when individuals and the State are both under the authority of God and the Law of God.

If the Rulers of any nation do not "keep the Law", eventually God's judgment [Justice] will come upon the Nation-
1 Samuel 12:14 If you will fear the LORD and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, and if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God, it will be well. 15 But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you and your king.
2 Kings 18:12 [Israel was sent into captivity] because they had not obeyed the LORD their God, but had violated his covenant-all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded. They neither listened to the commands nor carried them out.
An ideal king [civil government] was modeled by Hezekiah-2 Kings 18:5 Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel. 6 He held fast to the LORD and did not cease to follow him; he kept the commands the LORD had given Moses. 7 And the LORD was with him; he was successful
The role of a king [President, etc] is described in this prayer-Psalm 72:1 Endow the king with your justice, O God... 2 [that] He will [rule] your people in righteousness... with justice.

This is an excerpt from my website Essay at- http://www.reformedliving.org/index.php?option=com_

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 17:04

HOW GOD JUDGES NATIONS TODAY

The pagan rulers mentioned in the Old Testament did not know the Mosaic Law. However, they were still held accountable to God for their actions according to the most basic moral principles of that Law. See the stories of Sennacherib (2 Kings 19:22f + 27f + 7), Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 25:9,11f), Belshazzar (Dan5), and the king of Tyre (Ezek 28)
The Apostle Paul tells us that God was just in His judgment of these pagan rulers, because Rom 1:19 what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that [Rulers] are without excuse. 32...they know God's righteous decree...

Rom 2:14 Indeed, when Gentiles [Rulers, Nations], who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, 15 since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.

Pagans, whether Rulers or simply citizens, have "written on their hearts" a basic sense of moral "oughtness". Yes, they have a "fallen nature" and they are "dead in sin"; but, they are still human beings and this inner witness of conscience is still present, as are all the other qualities of human beings, such as rationality and creativity. As Rom 2:15 says, they may well have great inner conflict over what is right and wrong and a sense of moral guilt, even if "hard-hearted"; but they still have an inner witness that some acts are morally horrific, while others are noble.

This gives Believers "common ground" for discussion with their non-believing friends. This common ground is "General Revelation". It requires Special Revelation via the Scripture to know the Gospel; nevertheless this "Natural Law" exists and it is the basis God has for holding pagan Nations accountable for their actions. This is an excerpt from my Website Essay

<http://www.reformedliving.org/index.php?option=government-a-politics&Itemid=57>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 16:58

Sunday, February 6, 2011

IS HEAVEN A PARALLEL UNIVERSE?

We pray to our Father in Heaven. Where is it? Could it be another Universe. We believe that God existed before the Time-Space-Matter Universe we know and live in. We believe He created it. Did He Himself live in another Universe? Given His Nature, could He? When we Christians die, we believe we go to Heaven. Where is that? Could it be another Universe? Just wondering. Fascinating subject. Consider what this Physicist has to say- "With its hegemony diminished, "universe" has given way to other terms introduced to capture the wider canvas on which the totality of reality may be painted. Parallel worlds or parallel universes or multiple universes or alternate universes or the metaverse, megaverse, or multiverse — they're all synonymous and they're all among the words used to embrace not just our universe but a spectrum of others that may be out there. You'll notice that the terms are somewhat vague. What exactly constitutes a world or a universe? What criteria distinguish realms that are distinct parts of a single universe from those classified as universes of their own? Perhaps someday our understanding of multiple universes will mature sufficiently for us to have precise answers to these questions. In the end, labeling one realm or another a parallel universe is merely a question of language. What matters, what's at the heart of the subject, is whether there exist realms that challenge convention by suggesting that what we've long thought to be the universe is only one component of a far grander, perhaps far stranger, and mostly hidden reality. During the last half century, science has provided ample ways in which this possibility might be realized." ---quotes from a new book on Parallel Universes
<http://www.npr.org/2011/01/24/132932268/>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 02:30

Saturday, January 22, 2011

ROE vs WADE (cont) DISHONEST DEFINITIONS

"What the court did in its divided opinion was to develop a new judicial theory--that a woman has a constitutionally protected right to privacy. The U.S. Constitution does not mention any such right, but the Court read it into the 14th Amendment which prohibits a state from unreasonably interfering with life, liberty, and property. The court expanded the meaning of the word "liberty" to guarantee a woman's right to privacy in choosing an abortion." Although the court said that the liberty guaranteed by the fourteenth amendment protects the woman's right to privacy, at the same time the court held that it did not protect the unborn, since the court arbitrarily determined that a fetus is not a person and thus not a concern of the court"

<http://www.christianity.com/ChurchHistory/11630832/Over> and over arguments of all kinds are waged and won using traditional words, and concepts, that have been hi-jacked by people who then dishonestly use them with different, even opposite, meaning than is normal to support their position. The unsuspecting or naive are fooled into agreeing with something they do not believe in. As the above article illustrates, this tactic is demonstrated by the way pro-abortion advocates have used the word "privacy" as it is found in the Constitution, as well as how the Court defined "person". This dishonest argument involving a single word is compounded by reading into a sentence something it does not say, i.e.- the 14th Amendment to the US Constitution. This common tactic opposes the way both the word and the sentence have been understood and used by most people for centuries. This twisting the Constitution and its words is also demonstrated in the argument about the word "Marriage", using both the Constitution and Scripture for support. The same thing happens in the discussion of "Welfare", "Freedom", "Justice" and "Rights". Likewise, Scripture is grossly misinterpreted and misused with the subject of "The Poor". Reader beware!

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:09

Monday, January 17, 2011

NEW: WRIGHT IS WRONG ABOUT THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM

I just posted a new Essay on my website. It is a response to a popular quote from NT Wright- "Jesus's resurrection is the beginning of God's new project not to snatch people away from earth to heaven but to colonize earth with the life of heaven. That, after all, is what the Lord's Prayer is about."With all due respect, I disagree!
<http://www.reformedliving.org/>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 17:17

Tuesday, January 11. 2011

WHAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AND WHAT IT IS NOT!

The Major Theme of Jesus ' preaching was the Kingdom of God. The same theme is very popular among younger Christians these days. Christian speakers, books and college advertisements all broadcast it and challenge youth to become Kingdom builders. (In contrast, very few are giving the Apostle Paul any attention. In fact, Paul is often denigrated for preaching a different Gospel , i.e.-"Justification by faith alone", than Jesus did. There is nothing new about any of this and it is just as wrong-headed and unscriptural as ever. The problem begins (as so often is the case) with definitions. What did Jesus mean by the "Kingdom"? It is not the same as what today's "kingdom-builders" mean. To begin with, the word "Kingdom" has both a static and a dynamic meaning. It is crucial to know both and to distinguish between them. Here is a short overview of the topic. See my full Essay on my website <http://www.reformedliving.org/>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 13:07

Friday, October 15, 2010

THE GOD-GIVEN MISSION OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT

Conservative Republicans, and especially Tea Party members, rail against Big Government and continually are heard to say they want less government in their lives and affairs. The Bible is very clear that God instituted civil government as such and that it exists to serve Him. Civil Government is essentially good. The problem is not the size of civil Government. The problem is that God has limited the function of Government and those limits have been breached. Christians need to learn about "Sphere Sovereignty". It provides a Biblical basis for Social or Public Policy and should be the basis of our attitude toward Civil Government. This Biblical Social Policy begins with the Sovereignty of God- that He is Lord of all and that as such His Word provides the Norms by which He expects all to live or function. Every sector or sphere of life is meant to be lived coram Deo, Latin- "before the face of God"- living all of life accountable to God.

Beginning from the creation account in Genesis, we learn Human life is divided into 4 sectors or "Spheres". There are three basic "Spheres" and a fourth is derived from them. They are Marriage, Family (which includes Education), Church and Civil Government. The fourth Sphere is Civic Community which includes Commerce and Culture. They all exist to enable Humanity to obey the God-given Mandate to be stewards of the Earth for God's Glory. Each of these four Spheres has specific functions and limits, as well operational Norms. Each Sphere has its own inner working or system, with members fulfilling various functions or roles. The forms they each take in practice and the actual members of each Sphere at any specific time and place may vary according to circumstances. Because God is sovereign, none of the Spheres can be. All are limited. Each Sector has its own authority or what is called "sphere sovereignty" in relation to the other Spheres, but none of them are absolute or autonomous. They must cooperate with each other but must not interfere with each other's responsibilities. The emphasis is on local. The more local the better. The emphasis is also on voluntary cooperation between Spheres in the Community and between Communities. The more of that the better. Respect for Sphere Sovereignty especially applies to Civil Government. This is obviously the area of greatest contention and controversy. Civil Government is to respect and not usurp or curtail the responsibilities of the other Spheres, i.e.- Marriage, Family, which includes Education; Church and Civic Community, which includes Commerce and Culture. For example, this Doctrine of Sphere Sovereignty gives the responsibility for welfare and the care of the sick, the widowed and orphaned, the unemployed and the homeless to the Family and Church and to the local civic Community. The State has no business to interfere with or usurp these God-given responsibilities nor to take money (taxes) from citizens for programs that do. Therefore, Biblical Christians oppose the concept and many programs of what is commonly known as the "Welfare State" and why they oppose the popular entitlement mentality. The various Associations in a Community are not to forego their independence and look to the civil government for support. These groups, whether for business or the arts, are extensions of the Family and Church. The State has no right to interfere with them in any way. In practice, this Doctrine leads to a rejection of many "tax breaks", as well as much government funding and most subsidies and grants. In our Society, it means advocating for privatization (or at least, the localization) of just about everything. The emphasis is on local. The more local the better. The emphasis is also on voluntary cooperation between Spheres in the Community and between Communities. The more of that the better. The only legitimate, God-given function for Civil Government is Justice, i.e.- the enactment of Law (laws in harmony with the principles of Biblical Law), Law enforcement, Courts and a legal system guaranteeing due process- all to maintain peace and to protect citizens, Communities and the Nation from injustice, physical harm and danger from any quarter. The latter includes maintaining and using Armed Forces. Taxing the people for this work is not theft. It is the obligation of citizens to pay for such services by its Civil Government. Working out and applying this neo-calvinist (neo-kuyperian) Social Theory in our pluralistic Society is, granted, a great challenge. Evangelicals should accept it. One organization that has this Mission is the Center for Public Justice <http://www.cpjustice.org/content/about-center>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 09:09

Sunday, September 26, 2010

BLESSED ARE THE POOR

The Preacher we heard this morning titled his sermon, "God is biased" He explained that he, the preacher, was a liberal Democrat, but he was speaking today as a Bible Scholar. He went on to explain his sermon title: God is biased toward the Poor. He began with Luke 6:20 And he [Jesus] lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 "Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. 24 "But woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation 25 "Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger. The Preacher then gave statistics about Poverty in the US [as defined by our Government] and the great gap there is between rich and poor in this country. Yes, there is such a gap, but is any of this what Jesus meant by this Beatitude? Who are the "Poor" to whom Jesus is referring in the Beatitude of Luke 6:20?

Please read my entire and extensive study of the Beatitudes which follows.

BEATITUDES OF MATTHEW 5

Basis of Interpretation:

1. Old Testament and Luke given priority over Paul. Original audience was the Disciples, not unbelievers.

Historical-literal meaning given priority over a spiritual-theological meaning

Primary Old Testament Cross Reference

Isaiah 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted [the poor]; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; 2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; 3 to grant to those who mourn in Zion — to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.

Primary New Testament Cross References

Luke 4:17 and there -was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written, 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed. 19 to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." 20 And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 And he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Luke 6:20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 "Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. "Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh. 22 "Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, on account of the Son of man! 23 Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets. 24 "But woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation 25 "Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger. "Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. 26 "Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

5:3 the poor in spirit

These are those who feel helpless and destitute through difficult circumstances and who hope in God for deliverance—the opposite of the arrogant and self-sufficient. This describes the righteous poor of the Psalms; they are keenly conscious of a desperate need and are certain that God, and God alone, can meet that need, e.g.- Psalm 10

1 Why dost thou stand afar off, O LORD? Why dost thou hide thyself in times of trouble? 2 In arrogance the wicked hotly pursue the poor; let them be caught in the schemes which they have devised. 8 He sits in ambush in the villages; in hiding places he murders the innocent. His eyes stealthily watch for the hapless, 9 he lurks in secret like a lion in his covert; he lurks that he may seize the poor, he seizes the poor when he draws him into his net. 10 The hapless is crushed, sinks down, and falls by his might. 11 He thinks in his heart, "God has forgotten, he has hidden his face, he will never see it." 12 Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up thy hand; forget not the afflicted. 14 Thou dost see; yea, thou dost note trouble and vexation, that thou mayest take it into thy hands; the hapless commits himself to thee; thou hast been the helper of the fatherless. 17 O LORD, thou wilt hear the desire of the meek; thou wilt strengthen their heart, thou wilt incline thy ear 18 to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more. 5:4 those who mourn

These are those who grieve because they are oppressed. They look to God for their comfort and deliverance. Again, see the righteous poor in the Psalms and ancient Israel, e.g.-

Psalm 34:1 I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. 2 let the afflicted hear and be glad. 4 I sought the LORD, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. 6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. 7 The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. 8 O taste and see that the LORD is good! Happy is the man who takes refuge in him!. 15 The eyes of

the LORD are toward the righteous, and his ears toward their cry.. 17 When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. 18 The LORD is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit. 19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the LORD delivers him out of them all.

Remember that the Disciples, and the Church that heard the Beatitudes first, were persecuted people

Luke 6:22 "Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, on account of the Son of man! Luke 6:21 "Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh.

Matthew 5:4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted Matthew 5:11 "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Revelation 7:9 I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!" 13 Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and whence have they come?" 14 I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night within his temple; and he who sits upon the throne will shelter them with his presence. 16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. 17 For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

2 Corinthians 1:3 blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort. 4 who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 5 For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. 6 If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. 7 Our hope for you is unshaken; for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort. 8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. 9 Why, we felt that we had received the sentence of death; but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead; 10 he delivered us from so deadly a peril, and he will deliver us; on him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. 5:5 the meek [almost synonymous with "the poor"]

These are those who remain disciplined and under control in the midst of trying circumstances, patiently enduring while they wait for God's help

Psalms 37:1 Fret not yourself because of the wicked, be not envious of wrongdoers! 2 For they will soon fade like the grass, and wither like the green herb. 3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; so you will dwell in the land, and enjoy security. 5 Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act. 6 He will bring forth your vindication as the light, and your right as the noonday. 7 Be still before the LORD, and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over him who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices! 8 Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil. 9 For the wicked shall be cut off; but those who wait for the LORD shall possess the land. 10 Yet a little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look well at his place, he will not be there. 11 But the meek shall possess the land, and delight themselves in abundant prosperity.

5:6 those who hunger and thirst for righteousness

1. These are those who hunger for God to act on behalf of the faithful poor, mourning and meek- delivering and vindicating them: This would be righteousness- God doing what is right for His people: justice. This is the primary meaning of "Righteousness".

Psalms 37:12 The wicked plots against the righteous, and gnashes his teeth at him; 13 but the LORD laughs at the wicked, for he sees that his day is coming. 14 The wicked draw the sword and bend their bows, to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those who walk uprightly; IS their sword shall enter their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. 16 Better is a little that the righteous has than the abundance of many wicked. 17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken; but the LORD upholds the righteous. 28 For the LORD loves justice; he will not forsake his saints. The righteous shall be preserved for ever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off. 29 The righteous shall possess the land, and dwell upon it for ever. 32 The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to slay him. 33 The LORD will not abandon him to his power, or let him be condemned when he is brought to trial. 34 Wait for the LORD, and keep to his way, and he will exalt you to possess the land; you will look on the destruction of the wicked. 35 I have seen a wicked man overbearing, and towering like a cedar of Lebanon. 38 But transgressors shall be altogether destroyed; the posterity of the wicked shall be cut off. 39 The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; he is their refuge in the time of trouble. 40 The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked, and saves them, because they take refuge in him. 5:10 those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake [i.e.- for doing right]

This is the second meaning of "Righteousness" It is right conduct, conduct based on God's Law; people doing what is right in God's eyes

Matthew 21:32 For John came to [show you -NIVJ the way of righteousness

Luke 3:7 [John] said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him. "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 10 And the multitudes asked him, "What then shall we do? "11 And he answered them, "He

who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise." 12 Tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" 13 And he said to them, "Collect no more than is appointed you." 14 Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Rob no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."

1 Peter 3:12 For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those that do evil. 13 Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is right? 14 But even if you do suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, 16 and keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are abused, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. 17 For it is better to suffer for doing right, if that should be God's will, than for doing wrong.

4:12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a wrongdoer, or a mischief-maker; 16 yet if one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but under that name let him glorify God. 19 Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will do right and entrust their souls to a faithful Creator.

5:7 the merciful

These are those who practice mercy, i.e.- deeds of compassion, especially to the undeserving; similar to canceling debts-

Matthew 18:23 "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. 24 When he began the reckoning, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents; 25 and as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26 So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' 27 And out of pity for him the lord of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. 28 But that same servant, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat he said, 'Pay what you owe.' 29 So his fellow servant fell down and besought him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' 30 He refused and went and put him in prison till he should pay the debt. 31 When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. 32 Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me; 33 and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?'

Luke 10:29 he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, 34 and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' 36 Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" 37 He said, "The one who showed mercy on him." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

5:8 the pure in heart

The word "pure" means unadulterated, unmixed; these are people in whom there is nothing devious, there is no deceit and no hypocrisy; they are utterly sincere and not double-minded

Matthew 6:1 "Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. 2 "Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 3 But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Matthew 23:13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither enter yourselves, nor allow those who would enter to go in. 15 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you traverse sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves. 23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith; these you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. 24 You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel! 25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you cleanse the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of extortion and rapacity. 26 You blind Pharisee! first cleanse the inside of the cup and of the plate, that the outside also may be clean. 27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. 28 So you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. 29 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! 33 You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? 5:9 the peacemakers

What God did as Peacemaker was to remove the barrier that existed between humanity and Himself-

Ephesians 2:11 remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, 12... were at that time separated from Christ,

alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ. 14 For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end. 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; 18 for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God

This gives us a model for peacemaking. Peace makers are those who remove any barriers) that may exist between themselves and others, thus making reconciliation between the two possible. The context is persecution. Disciples will always be oppressed. If the barrier is Christ, or right living, it can not be removed. But, other barriers under our control can be removed. Specifically,-

1. what enemies have done to us can be absorbed; what's owed us can be canceled- that is Forgiveness

Matthew 6:12 "And forgive us our debts, As we also have forgiven our debtors" 14 For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; 15 but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

2. our anger and/or revenge for them can be forsaken- that is Non-Retaliation

Matthew 5:38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' 39 But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; 40 and if any one would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well; 41 and if any one forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

3. our hate for them can be replaced by doing good to them- that is Love Matthew 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? In these ways, barriers in us that separate us from others, our enemies, are removed. We thus have made peace with them, even if they do not make peace with us.

Conclusion Matthew 5:13 "You are the salt of the earth: but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden underfoot by men. 14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. 15 Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

The salt and the light of the world are not Christ or the Gospel, nor are they people who evangelize. The reference is to people who exhibit these characteristics. Their life, how they are with others, what they do- all of that together is the salt and light that the world needs.

The world's salt and light are people who

1. exhibit a deep, persevering trust in God, especially during great hardship

2. live a righteous life without compromise, even though persecuted for it

3. practice forgiveness, non-retaliation, and love towards their enemies

Such people are disciples of Christ and "sons" of God. Jesus admonishes them to be who they are and to do so out in the world. They are not to assimilate nor are they to separate!

Saturday, September 4, 2010

LIBERTARIANISM IS NOT SCRIPTURAL

The motto: "No one is above the Law" is a half-truth. The Law today may well be determined by Congress or Legislature or by the Supreme Court (if not the Law itself, the interpretation of it that is applied). That Law may be good or bad. The Biblical principle is that no one is above the Law of God. When individuals are sovereign, as in Libertarianism, all values are relative- they are individual values. The complete freedom of individuals (the philosophy of laissez-faire) is not a Scriptural or Christian value. When the State is sovereign there may be social stability, but that, too, is not a Scriptural or Christian value. In fact, true freedom and social stability are possible only when individuals and the State are both under the authority of God and the Law of God.

From my revised article on Biblical Principles of Government-
introduction-to-civil-government-biblical-principles

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:59

Thursday, September 2, 2010

IS DEBT EVIL?

Is Debt Evil? Is Profit making Biblical? Deuteronomy 28:12 You will lend to many... but will borrow from none. Romans 13:8 Owe no one anything. Romans 13:6 NRSV ...pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, busy with this very thing. 7 Pay to all what is due them—taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due. 8 Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For a discussion about these verses and the topic of Debt see my full article posted on my website [article&id=126:is-debt-evil](#)

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 09:32

REBUILDING THE ECONOMY GOD'S WAY

This helpful article explains one of the main problems in Washington: conflict and deadlock between policy wonks and academic experts and a President who can't make up his mind whom to follow if either. [articles/2010/09/02/strategists_vs_experts__obama_loses/](#)My concern on this Blog and in my website articles is with neither politics or economics as such. It is with seeking and applying the the Norms that God has revealed for both. Yes, we must be realistic and learn from the world's theorists and from history; but first we must learn from the Word of God. That is fundamental. All else must be based on that. What has God said about the Economy, etc. I have posted several studies on my website to answer that question. What are the God-given Principles the policy wonks and academic experts and all the rest of us must follow to work out the problems of our Economy? Here are some from a series of posts on my website [economic-principles-part-1](#)

Economics is about choices people make with regard to scarce resources- about exchanges people make of things [time, possessions, money, labor, knowledge, skills, etc] desired less, for things desired more. People chose to sacrifice some things in order to obtain other things because there is a scarcity of those things and nothing scarce is free (every scarce thing has a price). These choices are affected by values and incentives. They should also be determined by long-range (rather than immediate) consequences. It is in guiding such choices that the Bible is most relevant on economic matters. The Bible does not have a blueprint for any particular economic system. What it has in abundance are moral, principles and Norms (laws) that are relevant to economic topics, e.g.- work, private property, profit, money, employee and employer relationships, etc. The four fundamental economic principles from Creation [Genesis 1-2]- Stewardship, Sharing, Work and Growth. Stewardship is the dominant Biblical economic concept. God, as Creator, is ultimately owner of all created things. Any claim to ownership ("private property") by human beings collectively or individually, is conditional- never absolute. God, as Creator, has given responsibility for the management (stewardship) of His created world (the environment, our ecosystem, including all living creatures and natural resources), to human beings. They are to care, cultivate, preserve and use all of it for Him or as He directs. See Psalm 24:1 and 115:16 and 8:3-8. Sharing, by all for all, is essential. Life is paramount! All creation is intended by God for the sustenance of all living creatures. All natural resources are to be available to all by all. All end products of economic processes are to be available to all and shared by all. All people have the right and responsibility to work, to be engaged in the production and distribution of goods and services. This is the "fill and subdue" commandment. The fourth Biblical economic principle is growth. This is the "be fruitful and multiply" commandment. Growth in population (be fruitful) requires growth in economic production (multiply). This is to be desired and expected. Such growth of population and production will result in both scarcity and surplus of goods and services. This, in turn, leads to exchange and trade, governed by supply and demand. Stewardship, Sharing, Work and Growth are all good things, sanctioned and mandated by the Bible, by God himself. They are fundamental, universal principles that must guide all the particulars of our economic lives, still, in the 21st Century

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 08:55

Friday, July 30, 2010

NEW STUDY ABOUT THE LORD'S SUPPER

I have been rethinking what the Bible teaches about the meaning of the Lord's Supper. My all-new, in depth study is found on my website here <http://www.reformedliving.org/>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:15

Friday, May 7, 2010

MR OBAMA'S RECENT SPEECH ABOUT GOVERNMENT

Mr Obama's recent speech at the University of Michigan about Government did not explain what the form of Government is that we have as a Nation. He called it a Democracy. It is not. "The Government is us", he said. That sounds nice, but it is not true. (If it were a Democracy, all citizens would vote on all issues. Many very small towns are democracies.) It could be said that we have a representational form of Democracy (a Republic) in which citizens elect people to represent them and do the voting for them. Mr Obama also did not distinguish between the Government and the Administration in control of the Government. Many who do not have a problem with the former, have a major problem with the latter. In practice, many non-elected people have great authority in a Republic and make decisions in the governance of the Nation. Actually, the Government of the United States is more than a simple Republic. It is a Federal Republic. A federal system of government is one that divides the powers of government between the national (federal) government and state and local governments. The Constitution limits the Federal Government (likewise, State Constitutions do the same). Under federalism, each level of civil government has sovereignty in some areas and shares powers in other areas. For example: both the federal and state governments have the power to tax. Only the federal government can declare war. That there are acknowledged limits to all civil governments is important to keep in mind, because Scripture also places limits on Civil Government. The following material is excerpts from Biblical Principles to Guide our Political Action. The entire Article can be found on my website, [HERE](#)

"There are three basic creational communities or "spheres" and a fourth derived from them. This is neo-calvinist social theory and I am convinced it is Biblical. Each of these four spheres has specific functions and norms or boundaries. They are permanent inter-relational communities or spheres, even though the forms they take and the actual members at any specific time and place may vary. Each Sphere has its own inner working or system, with members fulfilling various functions or roles." "Biblical commands apply to marriage, family, property, work, money, care of the poor, care of animals and the environment, criminal justice and civil government. The faith that saves is the faith that obeys the Law of God in all such matters. The Civil Government that is good enforces these universal Laws. It is to pass and enforce legislation and laws based on the Law of God, but specific to our Society." "Each Creational social system has its own authority (known as "sphere sovereignty" to neo-Calvinists), but none of them are absolute or autonomous. They cooperate and must not interfere with each other's responsibilities. That especially applies to Civil Government. It is not to usurp or curtail the responsibilities of the other Spheres." "The State has no business to interfere with the responsibility of all able people to work and be self-supporting or to care for those who refuse to do so. This Doctrine of Sphere Sovereignty gives the responsibility for welfare and the care of the sick, the widowed and orphaned, the unemployed and the homeless to the Family and Faith Community (Church) and to the local civic community. The State has no business to interfere with or usurp these God-given responsibilities nor to take money (taxes) from citizens for programs that do. Biblical Christians oppose the concept and common practices of what is commonly known as the "Welfare State" and they are very suspicious of all entitlement programs and oppose the popular entitlement mentality." "The voluntary Civic Associations are not to forego their independence and look to the civil government for support. These groups, whether for business or the arts, are extensions of the Family and Church. The State has no right to interfere with them in any way. In practice, this Doctrine leads to a rejection of many "tax breaks", as well as much government funding and most subsidies. In our Society, it means advocating for privatization (or at least, the localization) of just about everything." "The only legitimate, God-given responsibility for Civil Government is enactment of Law (laws in harmony with the principles of Biblical Law), Law enforcement, Courts and a legal system guaranteeing due process- all to maintain peace and to protect citizens (and the Nation) from injustice, physical harm and danger from any quarter. The latter includes maintaining and using Armed Forces. Taxing the people for this is not theft. It is the obligation of citizens to pay for such services."

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 18:33

Monday, May 3, 2010

WHAT THE BIBLE REALLY SAYS ABOUT "IMMIGRANTS"

Biblical Light on the subject of Foreigners in Israel- it is not what you have heard

Many Christians (and others) favor five arguments to support an open door immigration policy, and particularly a Federal Government Policy that will facilitate welcoming "undocumented workers" or illegal immigrants into full inclusion in American life with all of its rights and privileges. These arguments are "Hospitality", "Humanity", "Image of God", "we are all immigrants" and especially the argument using what the Bible teaches about Aliens in Israel. This post is specifically about these five arguments. The claim is that they are Biblical or Christian. They are not. (Comments that go beyond this topic into other areas such as NAFTA and Free Trade are not appropriate here.)

"Hospitality" is commanded 3 times in the NT. The word (philoxenos) literally means "love of strangers" but is used to mean "being generous to guests". In debate about the treatment of illegal immigrants, some use the command to practice hospitality as a Biblical and Christian reason to welcome illegal immigrants into the United States. That is an unwarranted stretch of the 3 texts about hospitality. The word does not mean granting the legal privileges that citizens of a Nation have to those who enter that Nation illegally. It simply commands treating guests in our homes generously. Many signs protesting Arizona's new immigration law have words on them that say simply, "We are human". They are rightly concerned about the possible use of "racial profiling" and "racism" in pursuit of enforcing the new Law. (As I understand the new law it does not call for or require such behavior.) Of course, illegal aliens are human and must be treated as humans, i.e. humanely. This does not mean they must not be deported if found in Arizona. It would mean, in that case, that they must be treated humanely while being deported. To say the latter contradicts the former is arbitrary and not valid. Being "human" does not excuse anyone from being responsible for their behavior. All law-breakers are human beings. They should all be treated with respect as human beings, but that does not mean that all law breakers should be allowed to get away with breaking laws because they are human. In fact, one of the most important characteristics of being "human" is the ability to make choices and to be responsible for the consequences of those choices, including the illegal ones. The normal human being has an innate sense of morality and knows right from wrong. To treat people as "human" includes respecting exactly that about them and treating them accordingly. Another version of some muddle-headed thinking or poor argument is the use of the doctrine that everyone is created equal in the Image of God in defense of illegal immigrants. It has the same weakness as the argument about being human and is just as irrelevant in the defense of law-breakers. Still another popular argument is also fallacious in the same way: it persistently equates "immigrant" with "illegal immigrant". Almost every article writer and commentator seems to make this mistake. These are not the same! It is often repeated that America is a land of immigrants- we all are immigrants or children of immigrants. No one contests that, but that is not what the current debate is about. The problem and debate before us now is about those people who have been entering the US illegally (jumping the line as it were, ahead of those standing in the line for years, obeying the Rules that they might become legal immigrants). That is especially egregious because current [and incorrect] interpretation of the 14th Amendment of the Constitution provides full citizenship with all its legal rights to the babies of the illegal immigrants jumping the line upon the birth of those babies within the borders crossed illegally! See George Will's argument [HERE](#) What does the Bible say about aliens in Israel? This is not what many think! Probably the major argument in favor of open borders and full inclusion of "illegal aliens" into American life with all rights and privileges of Citizens is based on the Bible and what it allegedly says about "aliens", "sojourners" and "strangers" in Israel. Yes, the Bible has texts like these- Exo 22:21 "You shall not wrong a sojourner [a temporary inhabitant, a newcomer lacking inherited rights or foreigners in Israel] or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. Lev 19:34 "You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. An OT Professor from Denver Seminary [evangelical Baptist] has this to say in an article published on the Seminary website, "This concern for the sojourner in their midst was grounded in Israel's past. It had been born as a nation of despised foreigners, workers in an oppressive system in Egypt. God, though, had redeemed them in the Exodus, and that experience as immigrants was to mark them as a people for all time. Because they had come from immigrant stock, they were to be compassionate to the foreigners, who moved into their land. They were never to forget their immigrant history. That history defined them, and their treatment of the outsider was a measure of their faith in God (Lev. 19:34). God had designed Israel's laws to shine as an example to other peoples (Deut. 4:5-8), and the provisions for the sojourner were part of this exemplary legislation." Well, yes, but this is a superficial and very selective use of Bible texts that overlooks important distinctions. There were actually, four groups of "aliens". More specifically, there are four general words designating four groups of people. Each word or name had nuances that changed over time, but the following conclusions are reasonable. (a good source on this subject is the article, "Sojourners", in the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, 1988 revised

edition] Looking closer, the group of non-Jews who were fully accepted in Israel were the "Gerim", who voluntarily assimilated fully in all things Jewish. For all practical purposes they converted to Judaism and became members of the People of God (the LXX Greek equivalent for Gerim is "Proselytes"). They were accepted as Jews with all the rights and responsibilities of the Hebrew People, thus fulfilling the Biblical admonitions to treat Gerim properly (Deut 29:10f) This group of "Aliens" (-our word. In the Bible texts Gerim is translated as "Sojourners") submitted to the Laws of Israel in all matters, the males became circumcised, they observed Passover and all the other Feasts and Festivals and offered sacrifices in the Temple. (Lev 16:29, 17:8, Numbers 9:14, Exodus 12:47-49 etc.) There were periods in their later history when natural born Israelites treated the Gerim as second-class citizens. But Ezekiel prophesied the day when that would end and the Nation would experience peace and unity of all its citizens (47:22) This prophecy will be fulfilled in the Church. There was another Hebrew word, Tosab, used 14 times. It was interchangeable with Ger (Gerim, pl) But there were two other outside groups of aliens. The Nokri were "strangers", foreigners, living in Israel. They did not assimilate and were considered a threat to the Nation (Neh 9:2, Ezek 44:7-9, Zeph 1:8, Mal 2:11, Isa 2:6, etc) And there were the Zarim. These people living in Israel were considered foreigners, outsiders and truly "aliens" in every way. They did not belong and were seen as "illegitimate" outsiders. They were seen as dangerous to the country, enemies. Israel was warned against these Nokri and Zarim and they were not treated the same as the Gerim. (Joel 3:7, Prov 5:10, Psalm 54:3, etc) Texts about these last two groups must be included when people go to the Bible for guidance in how to treat illegal aliens in America, (See Prov. 5:10; Psalm 54:3; Ezek 7:21, 11:9; 16:32; Isa 1:7, 29:5; Hosea 7:9; Jer 5:19, 30:8, 51:51, etc) And we must remember all the warnings against intermarriage with members of these groups, e.g.- Ezra 9-10. In addition, there was the constant effort to eradicate non-Jews from the promised land when the Tribes of Isarel entered it. In this case, those people were (debatably) the original "citizens" and the Hebrew tribes were (debatably) the foreign invaders. But the point is that the Bible (God) discriminates between peoples according to their potential blessing or trouble for the Nation. Those that did not fully adopt the ways of Israel (especially its Religion and Laws), were not given a warm welcome by the natural Citizens and treated as equals with full rights and privileges of those citizens. After the Exile and during the period between the Testaments, Israelite feelings (their prejudice and hate against the Nokri and the Zarim hardened. Thus began the divide of Humanity between Jews and Gentiles. The heart of the Gospel as Paul preached it was that this division was to disappear through the work of Christ and by unity found in Him of both Jew and Gentile (Eph 2:19ff, Gal 3:28, Rom 3:19ff) How can all this teaching be applied to the problem of Illegal Immigrants in America? At the very least, it means that Scripture can not support a Federal Government "open door" Immigration Policy. It also means the Hospitality, We are Human, We are all made in the Image of God and we are all Immigrants Arguments do not support an Open Door Policy either. It should be obvious what the Bible teaching does support. There are two realities that must be faced. For all the high principles rhetoric, the real underlying issue here is money and jobs. That includes the demand by American businesses and private employers for certain kinds of workers. legal or not. The other reality is that there are 10-15 million plus illegal immigrants already here and they can not be ignored and no one can or will deport them all. At the very least, there must be a policy enacted and action taken that closes the border now to prevent any more people from entering the Country illegally while we figure out a humane and equitable way of caring for those who are here. Correcting the current interpretation of the 14th Amendment regarding birth rights will also remove a major incentive for many adults who come here to take advantage of that loophole. A report entitled 5 Myths about Immigration that is helpful to solving the debate can be found here, [HERE](#)

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 00:04

Wednesday, April 28, 2010

INTERPRETING THE US CONSTITUTION AND THE BIBLE

The effort is on to find the next Supreme Court Justice and the major litmus test is how the candidate will interpret the Constitution. The philosophy of interpretation will determine how the candidate would rule on many case that come before the Court, e.g. Abortion. I have long realized the same applies to Christian Faith and Practice. How one views the Bible determines how one judges issues such as Marriage. Interestingly, the debate about Constitutional Interpretation is very similar to the one about Scripture.

Here is a good, helpful article about interpreting the Constitution. See if it applies to how you read your Bible http://www.eppc.org/programs/constitution/publications/pubID.2394,programID.39/pub_detail.asp

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 18:54

Thursday, April 15. 2010

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT MONEY

My web article
[_HERE](#)

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 08:59

BIBLICAL BASICS ABOUT WEALTH

My web article
[HERE](#)

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 08:53

IS DEBT EVIL? IS PROFIT MAKING BIBLICAL?

The answer is in my article [HERE](#)

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 08:50

Tuesday, April 13. 2010

THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

Prior to the American Civil War, what was the largest City in the world? It probably had a million residents and was 5 times the size of Washington DC today. It was Angkor, capital of what is now Cambodia. It was finally destroyed by armies from neighboring Thailand in 1431. What made it vulnerable to invasion and destruction was the Climate. The mega city had two 35 years long droughts which were followed by massive floods. All that led to starvation and disease. Now it lies in ruins. An article about recent archeological research being done there can be found [HERE](#)This brings to mind the 4 Horsemen of the Apocalypse (Rev.6) Three ride across the land on Red, Black and Grey horses bringing famine, inflation and violence. A forth rider is on a White horse. I interpret him to be the Risen Christ. He wears a crown and "rode out as a conqueror, bent on conquest" (v.2)In the midst of terrible times, disasters and wars, Christ rides to overcome Evil Powers. The Crucified One conquers! We have the privilege today to ride with Him, His banner unfurled over us.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 19:06

Monday, March 22, 2010

A BIBLICAL HEALTH CARE PLAN

On my website is an Essay Developing a Biblical Basis for Health Care

It includes these topics-

Fundamental Biblical Principles to guide Health Care Policy
The Constitution and Government Health

Insurance
Christians and Health
Health Care and Moral Issues
Specific Cost Cutting Possibilities: Major Biblical Principle-

Good Stewardship

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:46

Wednesday, November 4, 2009

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNMENT: A Summary

1. God is the Highest Authority. Power is His alone! He is Sovereign over all. 2. All Rulers are to rule for God, as His representative and minister, even pagan Rulers. 3. All people who hold authority are subject to God and to the Law of God. 4. If the Rulers do not "keep the Law", God's judgment will come upon the Nation. 5. Does all of this about ancient Israel apply to other nation, including ours, today? YES

Looking more closely at Israel's Civil Government we learn that- 6. People and their Ruler are bound to each other, and to one another, by Covenant. There was to be no Tyrant usurping the place of God but there was also to be no tyranny of the minority or Elite over the majority of citizens. And all citizens were to be responsible for the life and well-being of the entire Nation and make decisions for the common good. (See Exodus 19, The entire Book of Deuteronomy and Nehemiah 8-10) 7. Not only was Government to be under Law, there was a system by which the Government conducted its business and this System will be a decentralized hierarchy (Exodus 18:13-26) These last two Principles were enlarged upon by the Protestant Reformers and their followers and eventually they became an important influence in the writing of the Constitution and government of the United States of America. In particular, Covenant became Contract and the decentralized hierarchy developed into three equal branches sharing the power (Executive, Legislative and Judicial). The political and historical reason was fear of Tyranny (King George). The theological reason was the Nature of Man- it requires restraint, checks and balances. The Puritans believed in the sinful nature of human beings and they knew that power corrupts those who have it and safeguards must be in place to prevent that corruption. Puritan (Reformed) concepts were also the major source for the concepts of the equality of all, Inalienable Rights and participatory Democracy, going back to the Magna Carta. We can not understand our political freedoms apart from Biblical and Reformed Theology. It is the tree from which the "apples" we enjoy came. Without that tree, which is now almost completely cut down, there is no foundation or security for those freedoms in the future. We must wake up to that truth!

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 13:20

Wednesday, October 7, 2009

NEW: BIBLICAL BASICS ABOUT MARRIAGE

Why God instituted Marriage: to cultivate and care for Creation

Genesis 2:4 ... the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. 5 When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, 6 and a mist was going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground 7 then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. 8 And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. 15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. [BUT] V.18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone [to do this work]. God had said everything [He had made] was good (1:31). This is the first "not good" in the Bible cf 1 Cor 11:8f; 1 Tim 2:13 Man being by himself is not good. READ THE ENTIRE ESSAY ON MY WEBSITE HERE

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:05

Monday, September 21, 2009

THE MIND OF GOD AND THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD

What is the relationship of the Mind of God and the Scientific Method? 1. What is the Scientific Method?

Observation (measurement: quantity and quality)

Generalization (assigning meaning to the data collected), using induction and deduction

Verification (testing the Generalization, ie- its predictability, repeatability)

Modification

Postulation of a Theory or Law (always subject to change)

Knowledge gained by this Method is posteriori or empirical knowledge. It is certainly a valid and important way of gaining Knowledge, but we must disagree with those who insist that Knowledge is possible only using the Scientific Method. That is Scientism and it rests on a Pre-Supposition: Whatever can not be known by the Scientific Method does not exist, or, at best, is unknowable. This is Philosophical Naturalism and assumes a priori that reality is confined to a closed time-space world, ie- Reality is confined (limited to, by definition) what can be observed and measured. This is a totally arbitrary or dogmatic "Faith".

The Scientific Method itself rests on 3 Presuppositions (Faith Statements!)

There is some reality to be observed and measured

This reality has order. It is appropriate to describe it logically, rationally or mathematically

There is a causal principle at work in this reality. There is uniformity and continuity. Prediction is possible

Note: Scientists also recognize and utilize intuition What justification is there for these presuppositions underlying the Scientific Method? Are they simply self-evident? The answer is the same as in regards to the Laws of Aristotelian Logic. These 3 assumptions derive from the Mind of God, character and acts of God, the Creator. As I explained in the study of Epistemology, when ever any one learns anything that is true (certified, justified) s/he has learned something that God knows. Science is the uncovering, the discovery, of the knowledge of God. This excerpt is from an Essay on my website. Read it [HERE](#)

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 10:14

JEWS: SINCERE, BUT LOST

This week and next, our Jewish neighbors celebrate major Religious Holidays (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur). Many of the Jews are Orthodox and I admire their commitment to their faith, morals and practices. I have more in common with them than I have with liberal Christians. Nevertheless, I agree with the Apostle Paul, who was an orthodox Jew himself. Though they are very zealous, Paul wrote, they are not enlightened about Salvation. They walk in the dark and are ignorant of the Gospel of Grace. They are sincere, but lost. (This is also true of many Protestants and Roman Catholics, as well)"my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. I can testify that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened. ...[but] if [they] confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in [their] heart that God raised him from the dead, [they] will be saved."-Rom 10:1-13

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 09:57

Sunday, September 13, 2009

CRACKING DAN BROWN'S CODE

The author of the Da Vinci Code is back with another book. In an interview published in today's edition of Parade magazine, Dan Brown was asked about his personal religious faith. He says as a boy he was very religious, but began reading about Astronomy and origins of the Universe. He questioned his Minister about the account in Genesis. Was the account of creation in "seven days" or the Big Bang Theory correct? The Minister replied, "Nice boys don't ask that question." [!] Mr Brown then said, "A light went off and I said, 'the Bible doesn't make sense. Science makes much more sense to me.' And I just gravitated away from Religion." How sad and how unnecessary. This incredible, incompetent, inadequate answer by a "Christian" Clergyman contributed to Mr Brown's books and unbelief. I think it is good the boy asked a question about Creation (although he makes an invalid comparison and draws a bogus conclusion from it) The Minister could have said something like this in reply (for starters)-

The truths that the passage (Gen.1) itself emphasizes do not require any definition of "day". These Truths are true, whether the day is 24 hours or millions of years:

1. God is the almighty Creator
 2. All that exists does so because God purposely and rationally brought it into existence
 3. God constantly sustains and provides for Creation: it is totally dependent upon Him
 4. All forms of life, all physical processes and changes in Creation are of God
 5. All of creation is good and serves God
- We must not lose track of these major points in a debate over the definition of "day" or the "How" of Creation

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 19:06

Wednesday, September 9, 2009

FREE MARKET CAPITALISM IS BIBLICAL

It is very popular these days to criticize Capitalism, blaming it for many of the troubles of the world. Many books insist that Capitalism is not Christian and that it can not be found in the Bible. But the Bible clearly teaches many economic principles and they provide solid support, in fact they require, Capitalism. Here is an excerpt from one of several Essays I have written about Biblical Economics and posted on my website-

"Capitalism is criticized for being unchristian, especially fostering greed. In truth, Capitalism fosters the human right to be free, free to make choices, to hold property and to make exchanges of goods and services as one wants. And far from greed, free markets must put others first. To be successful, businesses must ever seek to meet the needs of people. If they do not serve people successfully, over time they will fail as businesses. All of this, of course, assumes that producers and consumers are all protected from fraud, deception and theft. That oversight is the government's responsibility. When people criticize Capitalism they are really attacking interventionism. That is when there is government intervention in the market, when decisions are made by elite planners and bureaucrats rather than producers and consumers. Socialism is opposed in principle to the free market and seeks to replace its freedom of choices with some form of centralized control. That control sets prices and production levels. Socialism exercises government control to determine outcomes to achieve goals desired by the experts and planners. If Capitalism means freedom, Socialism means coercion. Socialism [many say] is supposed to reflect Christian values and be truly humane, yet it is the system that denies people basic economic freedoms. It is Socialism, not Capitalism, that creates the conditions that make monopolies possible and the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the few." Read the entire Essay and many others on what the Bible teaches about Economics [HERE](#)

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 21:47

Monday, September 7, 2009

BIBLICAL VIEW OF WORK

Jesus said to them, "my Father is always at his work ." -John 5:17 "In the beginning, God created", i.e.- God worked. This is the first thing said in the Bible about God's activity. God is a worker. Work is intrinsic to who God is. Human beings are the image or likeness of God. That means (among other things) that working is intrinsic to our nature. We were created to work. Working is an essential part of who we are as human beings. This means that working is not a curse or the consequence of the Fall. Working is good. Working has inherent value and meaning and dignity. The person with the most seniority, power and authority in the universe, God, never ceases working (cf John 5:17) Work is not something to "get out of" or to avoid by delegating it to others. Human beings may retire from employment, but should never strive for retirement from working itself.. To cease working would be to cease being fully human- to miss meaning and purpose in living. This is an excerpt from my essay about Work posted on my website [HERE](#)

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 10:33

Wednesday, September 2, 2009

"THOU SHALT NOT STEAL"

"Thou shalt not steal" is a basic moral law revealed by God in His Ten Commandments (Exo 20:15) It is usually applied to personal behavior and is taking something that belongs to someone else without their consent. That something is usually a thing, but it can include intellectual property (like a song or book from its writer) Things stolen can also include time from work (or more exactly, money from the company paid to you for work you are not present to perform) In the context of the other 9 Commandments, the thing stolen could be the Sabbath from God (it is His Day), or the Name that belongs to God, rest (a day off) from their work that belongs to everyone who labors for you (other commands will forbid stealing a fair wage from your workers). The thing stolen could be honor or obedience due to your parents, someone's life (including that of the unborn), sexual favor from someones' spouse, someone's good name or reputation or even their life itself (by slandering them or bearing false witness against them). All of this is included in the prohibition against stealing by individuals. The Law also applies to businesses and companies; Cities and States. It is wrong for them to steal from citizens, customers, charitable organizations or a Community itself. This commandment undergirds Private Property. If something thing rightly belongs to you, no one has the right to take it from you without your consent. That latter clause is important. It is the reason why (normally appropriate) taxation of individuals and corporations is forbidden, if it is done without consent of the taxed. It is arguable that much that the Civil Government takes from citizens and businesses today as taxes (and some of those are called different or other names) and is redistributed to other people to whom it does not belong against the taxed persons will, is theft. If the rich want to underwrite charities and voluntarily use their wealth to help the Poor or Needy that is good. If they agree to give it to the Government to be given by it to others, that is fine; but if the Government arbitrarily takes money from the rich and gives it away to the poor that is wrong. That money is private property and "Thou shalt not steal". God Himself warned Israel when they insisted upon having a King like other Nations, that they would face unfair taxes. (1 Samuel 8:9-18)

The attached article explains why it is also foolish and counter productive for a Government to do this-

http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2009/09/02/obamas_soak_the_rich_mentality/?comments=all

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 16:24

Saturday, August 29, 2009

HOW GOD JUDGES A NATION

One year ago today, I posted the following Essay on this Blog. I have amended it-God Judges Nations Daniel 2:20 'Blessed be the name of God from age to age, for wisdom and power are his. 21 He ...deposes kings and sets up kings; Luke 1:49 the Mighty One has done great things ...51 He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. 52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones Psalm 2:7 [speaking to Christ, God says] 'You are my son; 8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.' 10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. 11 Serve the Lord with fear, with trembling 12 ...or he will be angry, and you will perish Justice is the measure God uses for His Judgment of a Nation Justice is the sole purpose of Government. Civil Government exists to defend and save its citizens from oppression and to condemn, retrain and punish the oppressor. These are the two sides of Justice. Marriage and Family, Faith Community (Church) and the Civic Community (which includes everything from local operations of a town or city to associations for the Arts to organizations for Business) also have their respective and autonomous spheres of authority and responsibility. The latter include health, welfare and education. These are not the purpose of Civil Government The kings of Judah and Israel were all responsible, as kings, for ruling their countries according to the principles within the Law of God. God expects this of all pagan Rulers as well. Failure to keep either or both Tables of the Decalogue brought ruin to that king and, often, to that nation. Conversely, obedience brought blessing. See Deuteronomy 28 and dozens of verses elsewhere. What follows here is a summary based on those texts [adapted to the reality of our modern, pluralistic society God will bring down or destroy-1. Any government or administration which oppresses its citizens (i.e.- violates their God-given rights to life, to worship, to parent (and maintain families), to own private property and to have personal dignity respected. 2. Any Nation which destroys and/or invades and tyrannizes another Nation, including the cruel treatment of prisoners of war and war atrocities, particularly cruelty to civilians. (There is Biblical justification for a "Just War") 3. Any Nation (or City or State within a Nation) which practices or tolerates evil, i.e.- the transgression of God's moral laws within its borders. 4. Any Nation that condones or practices Idolatry and rejects or refuses to worship the God of Isr God's judgment of particular Nations or Peoples is historical, i.e.- within current events and time. He primarily uses other Nations and natural elements or disasters as His agents or instruments of His judgment. The Final Judgment Day follows the Second Coming of Christ and is the climax of History. God will prosper and bless- those Nations that respect the God-given human rights of its citizens and the citizens of other Nations as well. God blesses Nations whose citizens obey God-given Laws of Morality and Ethics and whose people worship the God of the Bible and reject all idolatry

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 13:45

Tuesday, July 28. 2009

DEFINING JUSTICE

What does God expect of any and all nations? What are the God-given functions of all Nations and of their Rulers and Citizens? That is the measure of America and all other Nations. Amos 7:7-8 This is what he showed me: the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb-line, with a plumb-line in his hand. And the Lord said to me, 'Amos, what do you see?' And I said, 'A plumb-line.' Then the Lord said, 'See, I am setting a plumb-line in the midst of my people Israel; Isaiah 28:17 I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line. God judges a nation, as a nation, by its record and practice of Justice. The issue is not whether a Country is Christian. That is the wrong issue. The right issue is, simply, whether or not a Country is Just. That is the issue in choosing, by vote or appointment, all Leaders: Is the candidate (for any position) just? Is a proposed Program, Policy, Budget or Bill just? Having said that, it is imperative that we define Justice Biblically!

What is Justice? The following is the Biblical definition:

- I.) Justice is God providing and securing those rights that He has decreed for people, the environment and animals--
- II.) Justice is God punishing those who deny or deprive people, the Land or animals the rights and responsibilities He has given them

God secures Justice through Civil Government.

ROM 13:1 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 3 ...rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. 4 For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

Rom 13:6 This is why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. 7 Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

[Note: Government, too, has rights- a right to respect and obedience from its citizens & a right to collect taxes]

The primary function of any and all civil governments is to be the instrument of God for Justice:

1. Secure and protect freedom for its citizens to exercise their rights and responsibilities
2. Prevent and punish all attempts to deny such freedom

Rights are whatever God says they are. Rights are defined by His Law. Rights are not something to be given or taken by Society or Government. Neither are "rights" simply something with which all people are born. Responsibilities are the converse of Rights.

There are man-made civil rights, legal rights, employees rights, consumer rights, etc., but Biblical Rights and Responsibilities take precedence over them all. All such "rights" are to be evaluated, accepted or rejected, in light of God given, and truly inalienable, rights. According to the Bible, these are God-given Rights:

All human beings have

the right to live.

the right to Worship and offer God allegiance and obedience.

the right to work and workers have a right to fair wages and to periodic rest from their work

Parents have the right to honor and respect and obedience from their children

Husbands and wives have a right to the fidelity of their spouses

Women have a right not to be abused and raped

Widows and orphans have a right to be cared for by family and community

Owners have the right to their possessions or property

The accused have a right to a fair and honest trial

Neighbors have a right to their privacy

Land has a right to be cultivated and not to be destroyed- Deut 10:14, 11:12, 20:19f; Lev 25:2-7, 23 Domestic Animals

have a right to be cared for - Exodus 20:10; Deut 22:6f,10, 25:4 Human Beings have these God-given Responsibilities (the converse of Rights)

respect the life of others.
practice Religion
both to work and to rest periodically
honor, respect and obey parents
respect all marriage vows
respect the property of others (never steal)
be honest with others and never slander
stay out of other people's business
cultivate and care for the Land (the environment)
care for and protect domestic animals and wildlife

All of this gives us criteria by which we must judge our Government and its Administration, all our elected and appointed Leaders, all domestic and foreign policies and programs, all budgets and legislation. When Government itself fails to protect or even denies its citizens' freedom to pursue their rights and responsibilities, it has become evil in those instances and Christians do not have to obey it. Our Rights and Responsibilities have to do with the topics of Life, Religion, Marriage, Family, Work, Property, Privacy, Safety, Legal Process, the Environment (Natural Resources) and Care of Animals and Wildlife, as well as Personal Morality. It is the business of Government to protect, with laws and their enforcement, through appropriate agencies, the freedom of people to exercise these Rights and Responsibilities. Conversely, Government is not to restrict or prohibit such freedom. The "devil is in the details" or "the devil is in the definitions". All the topics listed above must be unpacked for their exact definitions and specific application. Christians, as Christians, should be getting together to study all these issues and what the Bible says about them.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:02

Friday, July 3, 2009

THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF OUR GOVERNMENT

Many Christian writers on the subject of civil government focus on Freedom and Human Rights. They rightly teach that the Declaration of Independence, our Federal and State Constitutions and various Bills of Rights were all shaped by Biblical, more exactly, Reformed and Calvinist principles and values. These writers do not spend much time on Biblical Principles of Government; rather, they derive most of their Teaching about government from Systematic Theology. For example, the foundation of all freedoms is the freedom of the individual. It is Christianity that teaches the value of the individual and its corollary, the equality of all individuals, by its doctrine of personal salvation (Christ died for all.) But here are the Biblical Principles- just in time to help us appreciate our Christian Heritage as Americans. To evaluate where our Country is on its Birthday, it is important to know the Foundations upon which our Government was established. It is more important for us as Christians to know what our Nation should be now and what it is we should value and work to see happen in the future. Rom 13:1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. By God's design, this is a hierarchical world throughout, not anarchic or egalitarian. Authority is intrinsic to Creation, not an anomaly or evil. This means that force and coercion is essential to maintaining the Creation. It is not valid to arbitrarily equate force and coercion with violence or oppression, nor is Authority to be equated with Authoritarianism. There must be, there always will be, Authority. What is crucial is who exercises Authority and how, why and when. 1. God is the Highest Authority- The Kingdom, Power and Glory is His alone! He is Sovereign over all. ("He" is the Triune God of the Bible) Without God, authority will be either the individual or the State. Libertarianism is the ultimate sovereignty of the individual. Conservatism is the sovereignty of Traditions or Institutions- of the Elite. This, ironically, leads to the sovereignty of the State (or one of its Branches), which conservatives avow they do not want. 2. Kings [all governors] are to rule for God, as His representative and minister. This is true, even of pagan Rulers. 3. All people who hold authority are subject to God and His Law. 4. If the Rulers do not "keep the Law", eventually God's judgment [Justice] would come upon their Nation. By extension, this applies to the people of a Nation, especially Nations which consider the ultimate authority to reside in them ("All power to the People!") The motto: "No one is above the Law" is a half-truth. The Law today may well be "made" by Congress or the Legislature (or the People by vote or referenda) or by the Supreme Court (if not the Law itself, the interpretation and application of it). The Biblical principle is that no one (or no Law) is above the Law of God. When individuals or an aggregate of individuals (or a special interest group) are sovereign, as in Libertarianism, all values are relative- they are individual values. Those perceived needs may be satisfied for a time, but the freedom of individuals (the philosophy of laissez-faire) is not a Scriptural or Christian Ideal or Value. On the other hand, when the State is sovereign there may be social stability and the appearance of security, but that, too, is not a Scriptural or Christian value. In fact, true freedom and social stability are possible only when individuals and the State are under the authority of God and His Law. 5. Does all of this apply to all Nations, including ours, today? YES The pagan rulers mentioned in the Old Testament did not know the Mosaic Law. However, they were still held accountable by God for their actions according to the most basic moral principles of His Law. See the stories of Sennacherib (2 Kings 19:22f+27f+7), Belshazzar (Dan 5), king of Tyre (Ezek 28) and Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 25:9,11f) The Apostle Paul tells us that God is just in His judgment of pagan rulers (and peoples), because "what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that [Rulers] are without excuse. ...they know God's righteous decree... (See Romans 1:18-32) Pagans, whether Rulers or simply citizens, have "written on their hearts" a basic sense of moral "oughtness". Yes, they have a "fallen nature" and they are "dead in sin"; but, they are still human beings and this inner witness of conscience is still present, as are all the other qualities of human beings, such as rationality and creativity. As Rom 2:15 says, they may well have great inner conflict over what is right and wrong and a sense of moral guilt, even if "hard-hearted"; but they still have an inner witness that some acts are morally horrific, while others are noble. This gives Believers "common ground" for discussion with their non-believing friends. This common ground is "General Revelation". It requires Special Revelation via the Scripture to know the Gospel; nevertheless this "Natural Law" exists and it is the basis God has for holding pagan Nations accountable for their actions. Of course, America is accountable to God for its actions, not simply on the basis of Natural Law, but on the basis of Scripture. This is a deep part of our heritage and culture. We, as a Nation, can not plead ignorance of the Ten Commandments. 6. Though instituted by God and accountable to Him, Rulers and their subjects are bound to each other, and to one another, by Covenant. Specific Rulers, whether Kings or Presidents, legitimately rule only with the consent of the ruled. There are mutual obligations on both parties. There are also mutual responsibilities for all citizens in living together as a community of People (See Exodus 19, The entire Book of Deuteronomy, Nehemiah 8-10) 7. Civic authority is under a Constitution- Not only is there Law, but there is to be order- a system based on that Law for a particular time and place (again, see Exodus 19, Deuteronomy, Nehemiah). Generally speaking, the civil government under the Law, even a Monarchy, will be a decentralized hierarchy (Exodus 18:13-26) SUMMARY These Basic Biblical

Principles of Civil Government were enlarged upon by the Protestant Reformers and their followers and eventually became the basis for the government of the United States of America; in particular, Covenant became Contract and the decentralized hierarchy developed into three branches: Executive, Legislative and Judicial. Our Founders believed Government required restraint, checks and balances. The theological reason for the latter was the sinful nature of Man. The political and historical reason was fear of Tyranny (King George). Those two basic reasons are valid today. While Government is instituted by God and meant to serve Him, it can become demonized or evil and therefore must always be approached cautiously. And as Bible believing Christians and stake-holders in the Nation, accountable to God for what it is and does in our time, we should renew our commitment to see that it fulfill its destiny to be a Nation that glorifies God by following these Principles and, as such, to be a Light and example to all other Nations This Essay comes from my Website [HERE](#) where you will find the Scriptural references that go with it.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 18:45

Wednesday, June 17, 2009

WHY I DO NOT TALK WITH JW's AT MY FRONT DOOR

2 John 1:7-11 (English Standard Version)

7For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. 9Everyone who goes on ahead and does not abide in the teaching of [about- see v.7] Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching [Doctrine] has both the Father and the Son. 10If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching [Doctrine], do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, 11for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 19:32

Sunday, May 10, 2009

FAITH AND SCIENCE

Here is a very interesting website from Francis Collins, scientist extraordinaire and evangelical, too
<http://www.biologos.org/>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:16

NEW LOOK AT EVOLUTION FOR EVANGELICALS

"If (Francis) Collins is not familiar, he should be. He is the physician-geneticist who led the Human Genome Project for the National Institutes of Health and is noted for his discoveries of disease genes. Alas, he came along about eight decades too late for Bryan. But he may have entered the zeitgeist just in time for thousands (millions?) of others who have trouble embracing both Darwin and God without, as Collins puts it, their brains exploding. Collins, an evangelical Christian who was home-schooled until sixth grade, wants to raise the level of discourse about science and faith, and to help fundamentalists -- both in science and religion -- see that the two can coexist. To that end, he created the BioLogos Foundation and last month launched a Web site -- BioLogos.org -- to advance an alternative to the extreme views that tend to dominate the debate."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/08/AR2009050802383.html?nav=hcmoduletmv⊂=AR>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:04

Saturday, March 21. 2009

NEW ESSAY ON MY WEBSITE: "SPIRITUAL POWERS"

If you are serious about the subject of Spiritual Powers, what they are, what they do and about deliverance from them, then there is an an extensive Bible Study with many verses and word studies for you [HERE](#)

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 18:50

NEW ESSAY ON MY WEBSITE: SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Spiritual Warfare is not what people often think it is. If you want a good Scriptural Definition from the Apostle Paul look [HERE](#)

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 18:46

Saturday, March 14, 2009

HOMO or HETERO: WHAT MAKES A MARRIAGE BIBLICAL?

I recently completed an Essay about "Gay Marriage". It was in response to renewed efforts by an activist group in this State to seek all the legal rights recognized by the Federal Government for hetero sexual marriage. It is also an attempt to be positive, mindful that one of the major criticism leveled by young adults against traditional Christians and churches is that, on the subject of homosexuality, we are negative, judgmental, rigid, narrow-minded and unloving. Instead of condemning Gay Marriage or being negative about it, I have tried to present the Design for Marriage that is found in the Scripture. This approach should be far more fruitful than the current, and very regretful, confrontational one. I do not believe most Evangelicals, let alone young adults, know much about God's original Design for Marriage. They do not fulfill it themselves and have substituted another. They debate the topic from the basis of this second, errant Design. I have tried to rethink this whole subject with an open mind and my paper is a work in progress. It organizes my current thoughts, having just read new material from many writers with strong and contradictory opinions. This subject is not black and white and I do not want to be superficial. This post for my Blog is merely a summary of the much longer Essay. Instead of looking up verses about homosexuality throughout the Bible and beginning (and ending) with them, I began with Genesis and Creation. If we are to appeal to the Bible, we must begin at the beginning. That is essential. I recognize that this appeal to an external "authority" is not acceptable to many Radical Feminists and Gay Rights advocates (even though they appeal to the Courts for their validation) and that my appeal to the Bible disqualifies my conclusions in their mind; but Evangelicals have no choice. Basing our views upon the Bible is what we do. It is what makes us traditional Evangelicals (Many young Evangelicals are moving away from this approach, yet still, inconsistently, want to call themselves "Evangelical". That is a serious mistake.) God is a Spirit. God has no sexual gender. Genesis makes clear that sexuality (gender) was created by God. He made humans beings to be either male or female and the prime reason and purpose for sexual gender is procreation. This is not optional or a life choice. The only exception is for those who are unable to do this, for a variety of physical and health reasons. Sex is not for selfish pleasure, let alone to be exploited. Sex was never intended to be a commodity to be bought or sold to make money. God's design was that humans beings "be fruitful"; but this does not simply mean "to make babies". The purpose for having children is to "fill the earth" (not for personal satisfaction or quality of life). In the ancient Bible world, it was common for Emperors and Kings to install statues in their likeness throughout their domains. Everywhere people went, they would see these monuments and be reminded of who owned the land. Likewise, human beings are created to be God's likeness and are meant represent Him throughout the earth which belongs to Him. God never intended for people to cluster in cities. (That is the lesson of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11) They are to spread out everywhere. Unlike sculpted statues, the human images of God have work to do everywhere they are located. People are to be fruitful and fill the earth in order to care for it and cultivate its resources. They are created to re-present God around the globe and to serve Him with their labor. This is called the Cultural Mandate. (It is very different, than secular "environmentalism".) How many people, homo- or hetero-sexual) in this debate understand all of this, let alone live by it, including Evangelicals? In addition to sexual gender, there are gender traits and gender roles. These must be distinguished. I believe many of the problems we have about "sex" in our society comes from failure to do this. It is obvious that gender goes with reproduction. The role of impregnating is gender-based in males. The role of becoming pregnant and bearing children is gender-based in females. That is obvious, however the gender traits of masculine and feminine are not gender based. Males may have feminine traits and females may have masculine traits. Everyone has a mixture. A person, male or female, in whom masculine traits dominate can be described as masculine. A male is not necessarily masculine and should not be made to be so if he does not have the traits. Likewise, a female is not necessarily feminine and should have the freedom to be who she was born to be, as far as traits are concerned. Forcing people to be something they are not created to be, in this regard, has led many to be frustrated and conflicted. Gender roles should naturally be determined by gender traits. A person should function (have a role in their marriage or a "job") according to the traits they are born with. As far as traits and roles, nothing should be considered a given or predestined at the moment of birth when people present see the sex organs of the baby and shout out, "It's a boy!" or "It's a girl!") How do we determine what gender traits and roles are? Although God has no sexuality (God is not male. Males do not represent God better than females), God has chosen to reveal Himself as just that- a him, a he and a father. When we see how God is in relationship to others, including Jesus (son) and the Holy Spirit, we learn what masculine traits and roles are. Feminine traits and roles are the complimentary converse. They are yin and yang, two parts that make a whole. Masculine traits and roles require feminine traits and roles to complete them. Both are essential and equally important. They are intended by God to co-operate. Together we all image and re-present God in the world. Together, we serve God in the care and cultivation of "His" earth. The Original Design for Marriage: According to Genesis, a Biblical Marriage is present when a male person and a female person are living together in an intentional and permanent committed relationship. They each have left their family of origin (being "given" and taken") and have formally exchanged promises and vows (a Covenant made with each other and with God) to "cling" to each

other for the purpose of "being fruitful and multiplying" (having children) for the care and cultivation of God's earth. They intend to live and work together as "one flesh", as two persons complimenting each other (yin and yang) with their traits and roles as partners and co-heirs of God's blessings as long as they shall live. Any debate about any Marriage must be conducted with all of this in mind. It seems obvious, that there is room and need for change by everyone on this Subject

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 13:35

Tuesday, March 3. 2009

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE POLITICAL ACTION

We all image God inasmuch as we are rational, creative, moral and spiritual beings. We are also like God inasmuch as we are communal by nature. We are created with the ability and need to live with others- to live in community, even as God the Father, Son and Spirit do. We were never intended by our Creator to be solitary, autonomous, self-determined individuals. Rather we can find and develop our individuality, our life as a person, when we live in community. We become and fulfill what God created and gifted and called each of us to be, only when we live in relationships with others. That is the absolute prerequisite context for all consideration of "Human Rights". Our rights are rights only within relationships.

Read the entire Essay on my website.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:39

IS JUBILEE ECONOMICS BIBLICAL?

There are those who use Leviticus 25 as the main basis for what they call "Sabbath or Jubilee Economics" This is said to be an economy of enough, an economy of economic equality, an economy that rejects private property, an economy that is not based on a free market and the profit motive. These commentators insist this is Biblical Economics and their view is becoming very popular among younger Christians. Are they correct?

Read this Essay on my website and decide for your self.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:35

Tuesday, February 3, 2009

NEW ARTICLE ON MY WEBSITE: JUBILEE ECONOMICS

Some Christians today believe in what they call "Jubilee Economics". They are convinced that the Bible teaches an economy of enough, of economic equality and that the Bible rejects private enterprise, the free market and the profit motive. The latter are supposed to be unchristian. Where do these Christians find Jubilee Economics? One of the primary passages they use is Leviticus 25. I have posted a new Essay on this subject on my website, Reformedliving.org

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:20

Friday, August 29, 2008

HOW GOD JUDGES AMERICA and ALL THE NATIONS

Isaiah 16:18 I am coming to gather all nations Psalm 2:7 [speaking to Christ, God says] 'You are my son; 8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.' 10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. 11 Serve the Lord with fear, with trembling 12 ...or he will be angry, and you will perish Daniel 2:20 'Blessed be the name of God from age to age, for wisdom and power are his. 21 He ...deposes kings and sets up kings; Luke 1:49 the Mighty One has done great things ...51 He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. 52 He has brought down the powerful from their thrones The kings of Judah and Israel were all responsible, as kings, for ruling their countries according to the principles within the Law of God. God expects this of all pagan Rulers as well. Failure to keep either or both Tables of the Decalogue brought ruin to that king and, often, to that nation. Conversely, obedience brought blessing. See Deuteronomy 28 and dozens of verses elsewhere. What follows here is a summary based on those texts [adapted to the reality of our modern, pluralistic society]

God will bring down or destroy 1. Any government or administration which oppresses its citizens (i.e.- violates their God-given rights to life, to worship, to parent (and maintain families), to own private property and to have personal dignity respected. The sole purpose of the Government is to defend and save its citizens from oppression and to condemn, retrain and punish the oppressor. These are the two sides of Justice. Justice is the sole purpose of Government. Marriage and Family, Faith Community (Church) and the Civic Community (which includes everything from local operations of a town or city to associations for the Arts to organizations for Business) also have their respective and autonomous spheres of authority and responsibility. The latter include health, welfare and education. 2. Any Nation which destroys and/or invades and tyrannizes another Nation, including the cruel treatment of prisoners of war and war atrocities, particularly cruelty to civilians. (There is Biblical justification for a "Just War") 3. Any Nation (or City or State within a Nation) which practices or tolerates evil, i.e.- the transgression of God's moral laws within its borders. 4. Any Nation that condones or practices Idolatry and rejects or refuses to worship the God of Israel God's judgment of particular Nations or Peoples is historical, i.e.- within current events and time. He primarily uses other Nations and natural elements or disasters as His agents or instruments of His judgment.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:05

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

BEING HONEST WHEN USING BIBLE WORDS

Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 "(man lives) on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4) I am always harping on the importance of definitions. When it comes to the Bible, it is especially crucial, that we use the words we find there as they were intended. Reformed Christians and Evangelicals hold a high view of Scripture. It is the inspired Word of God- the written Word of God. This must mean we also have a high view of the words in the Word. We insist, that people who use the words of the Bible must abide by the meaning and use of the words according to their original intent. It just will not do for anyone to quote Scripture and use the words quoted to establish something alien or contradictory to the original use or meaning of those words. It will not do for people to use a word that comes from the Bible with a very different definition of that word than was original to the text and lead others to believe the hijacked word says what they are saying it says when it never did. Words such as "born again", "conversion", "kingdom", "Gospel", "righteousness", "grace", "discipleship" and "church" are often used in ways that are not faithful to the original intent of the writers using those words and concepts in the Bible. This is dishonest. What a writer or speaker actually tries to say may or may not be valid or true or important; but, naïve, trusting or ignorant people will be misled into thinking the writer or speaker is getting his message from the Bible. He is not if these Bible words have been purloined and are not used by this current writer or speaker in the way they are used and intended by the Scripture. That leads me to be skeptical about anything such a person writes. Another rule of thumb held by Reformed Christians is that Scripture must be interpreted by Scripture. Beware proof-texting and taking verses out of their original immediate and broad contexts. The same warning applies to so-called "word studies". Surely we can and most use a variety of study helps, but if we believe all Scripture is inspired by God, then it only makes sense that we begin our interpretation of what is written in Scripture, including specific words used, with the Book itself and the intent of its several writers as our primary guide.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 18:45

Tuesday, May 20, 2008

WHEN IS A NO-HITTER NOT A NO-HITTER? Defining "Grace"

Headlines here today celebrate a "No-Hitter". I have never agreed with this description of what happened. Jon Lester, Boston Red Sox pitcher, is credited with this accomplishment, the first lefthander to do it since 1956. Lester threw 130 pitches and the opponents never got on base, hence- a no-hitter. As always, it is a matter of definition! The Royal batters did in fact hit Lester's pitches 18 times. To me, that means the game was not a no-hitter. Apparently, the bat hitting the ball does not count as a hit unless the batter makes the bases (a base-hit). The fact is that the pitcher would not have his "no-hitter" without the help of those team mates in the field who enabled 11 groundouts and 7 flyouts to be made. They should all be credited with accomplishing a no-hitter, not just the pitcher. To me, a no-hitter would be a perfect game, in which every batter was struck out by the pitcher. What Lester has to his credit is really a no base-hitter.

My point here, is not about baseball, but definitions. My concern in this post is with the definition of "Grace". The Greek word "charis" translated as "grace", can simply mean the gift or favor of "help" of any kind. (Heb 4:16) The word speaks of kindness and good will. That motivates or leads to the help given. A grace-filled life would be a life filled with good will and kindness to others. "Charis" also can mean the merciful kindness by which God, through the work of the Word and the Spirit, turns sinners to Christ in faith and thereafter keeps, strengthens, increases them in saving faith. Salvation, from beginning to end, is all (this kind of) grace. (Ephesians 2:8- we are saved by grace) "Charisma", a related word, adds another dimension. It means a gift or favor given that is unmerited or undeserved by the recipient. God gives His grace, the gift of Salvation, to whomever He pleases and His choice of the person has no respect of the persons religious, social, economic or political status. The latter are irrelevant to God's choice. A common use of the word and concept of Grace has turned this Biblical definition around and, therefore, radically changed it. Instead of referring to God, it now refers to people. Discrimination on any basis, we hear, is wrong. We should show kindness and good will, i.e.- grace, to every one, especially the marginalized. Why? Because everyone, especially the marginalized, deserve it. It is their right as human beings to be treated with kindness and good will (i.e.- with grace) By introducing the words "deserving" and "rights" the Scriptural meaning of "grace" is negated, cancelled. No one deserves our good will or kindness. We are to give it unconditionally, because that is the right thing, the God-thing, to do. Being grace-full to others because they have in some way merited it, robs the Biblical concept of grace of its unique meaning. Why are you being kind to me? Because I am poor? Because I am a child? Because I have suffered? No. I am being kind to you because it is a God-thing. It is something He would do. He is good to all and His goodness is unconditional! If we attach any conditions at all to whom we will show favor and good will, we will be in danger of unintentionally contradicting ourselves. Why be kind to the rich, the greedy, the violent, the abusers and exploiters of the world? They do not deserve my kindness. They have no right to my mercy. Exactly! But note we are now saying mercy must be deserved and that means it is no longer mercy. This fudging of the definition of "grace" in its generic sense leads to changing the word as used in the matter of Salvation. What standards or requirements must be met in order to be saved? What do I have to do to earn salvation? Nothing! Nothing! The Grace that leads to Salvation is totally unconditional and unmerited by definition. Religious, Social, Economic and Political status have nothing to do with whom God chooses to save; neither do race, gender or anything we have done or failed to do. When the Bible says Salvation is by Grace it means Salvation is totally, absolutely unmerited, undeserved. Period. God saves whom He wants for reasons known only to Him and to His Glory alone. It would be a false Gospel to assure anyone or everyone that they are saved because they are, well, a particular anything. We can debate the meaning of "no-hitter" in baseball; the definition of Grace, as the Bible uses it, is beyond debate.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 18:55

Thursday, April 10, 2008

GOOD OLD PAUL- GOOD OLD GOSPEL

This week several major Theologians, and many Pastors and Laypeople gathered locally to hear lectures about the Apostle Paul and his relevance to our time. I know many young evangelicals who have serious problems with Paul (really with their perception of Paul). They say they prefer "Jesus" (their perception of Jesus- shades of 1 Cor.1:12!) I appreciate the entire Bible. I have rejected the Marcion-type heresy that says we must be "New Testament Only" Christians, rejecting the God and authority of the Old Testament (I seriously considered that at one point years ago). I also reject the idea that the Gospel is the Sermon on the Mount and that Paul perverted the ("red-letter") teaching of Jesus into his own "Christianity", turning the humble Servant into the Cosmic Christ. That is all error! That said, Paul is still my main man when it comes to spelling out the saving Gospel and I still give far more weight to his didactic letters than to any narrative portions of Scripture. And as interesting and helpful the current concern is for studying the cultural, sociological, historical, even psychological context and background of Paul, I still chose to take him "straight up" on face value in the traditional, historical-grammatical manner. What brings all of this to mind today? I heard a Sermon recently. The message was about Holy Communion, based on Luke 24. If I understood the Speaker, somehow our taking Communion (whoever we are) enables God to accept us as His children. This is a wonderful assurance to have and why we take Communion frequently- Christ is "known" in the breaking of the Bread and so are we. Interesting. For the record, if I "got the Message", this is not evangelical, Reformed or Scriptural Doctrine. Paul makes it crystal clear that sinners are accepted or "adopted" as the sons (children) of God at the moment they enter into "union" with Christ by the exercise of saving faith- and in no other way. A sinner may receive Holy Communion every day for years, but if there is no such saving faith, there is no union with Christ, there is no adoption. We are recognized as children of God because, from that moment, being "in Christ", we are clothed in His Righteousness (reckoned or imputed to us by grace) and then given His Spirit to indwell us, a mark or seal of the adoption, who in turn gives us assurance we have been adopted by God. This is all very Pauline and none of it was mentioned in the Sermon I heard. Sadly, because our assurance of belonging to God is based on these truths, not from receiving Communion.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 09:34

Monday, March 24, 2008

PSALM 88- THE WORD OF THE LORD?

This Psalm describes a very depressed (bipolar?) man. It is the darkest and most sad of all the Psalms. O Lord, my God, my Savior, by day and night I cry to you. Let my prayer enter into your presence; incline your ear to my lamentation. I am full of trouble; my life is at the brink of the grave... I have become like one who has no strength; Lost among the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave. ...in dark places and in the abyss. I am in prison and cannot get free. My sight has failed me because of trouble; Lord, I have called upon you daily; I have stretched out my hands to you. O Lord, I cry to you for help; in the morning my prayer comes before you. Lord, why ...? why ? ...I have been wretched and at the point of death; ... with a troubled mind....terrors have destroyed me; They surround me all day long like a flood; they encompass me on every side. ...and darkness is my only companion. A more careful look at this Psalm reveals the cause of this man's pain and depression. The Psalmist is not suffering for the reasons most men suffer. He believes God is making him suffer!

O Lord, my God, my Savior, by day and night I cry to you. Let my prayer enter into your presence; incline your ear to my lamentation. He believes in God, that God is his Savior, that God answers personal prayers. He is a man of continual prayer. He believes God works wonders, has shown loving kindness and is both faithful and righteous. These are positive things about this lamenting Psalmist that must be kept in our mind as we continue reading his complaint. He says I am full of trouble; my life is at the brink of the grave. And that, he believes, is God's fault. God is making his life miserable! You have laid me in the depths of the Pit, in dark places and in the abyss. Your anger weighs upon me heavily, and all your great waves [the troubles you send me] overwhelm me. You have put my friends far from me; you have made me to be abhorred by them; [now] darkness is my only companion. O Lord, ... Lord, why have you rejected me? why have you hidden your face from me? Why are you treating me this way? And not just now, but all of my life. Ever since my youth, I have been wretched and at the point of death; I have borne your terrors [the terrible things you have put me through] with a troubled mind. Your blazing anger has swept over me; your terrors have destroyed me; They surround me all day long like a flood; they encompass me on every side. Ever since my youth! The Psalmist does not identify his troubles, just that he has them and they are from God and his prayers for God to help him go unheeded. He does not admit or repent of any sin. Does he feel miserable, on the point of dying, because of his troubles or because he feels God has abandoned him or is punishing him? The Psalmist is Heman (see the Title) and he probably is the man mentioned several times in 1 and 2 Chronicles as one of the leading Singers and Musicians serving the King. He was assisted in this Service by his many sons. Although lamenting at the time of this Psalm, the writer was married, had children and a presumably normal life serving in the Courts of the King, by making music for public Worship. Since he complains that he has struggled with all his trouble since his youth, his Depression must have been on and off because he was able to live a normal life and work- as a church musician no less! (Perhaps he was manic-depressive, as many creative people are) Millennia later, we are still served and blessed by his work (and the work of his fellow musicians- 1 Chronicles 6:31-37 see the 12 "Korahite Psalms- 42-49, 84-85, 87-88). These words of Psalm 88 are not inspired, out breathed, by God. They come from deep within a very troubled, despondent (mentally ill?) Believer and are addressed to God. But the entire Psalm, this man's prayer, comes back to us from God. The very human words have become God's Word to us. God has seen to it that they are included in the Bible for our benefit. God can use them to speak to our needs, especially if we are like the Psalmist. God uses these tormented human words to reveal thoughts (propositions) from His mind to us. How? Why is this Lament (and others like it) in Scripture? We are to be realists about life and its pain. Believers can suffer emotionally and mentally and physically for many years. There is not always a happy ending to our lives on earth. We are to persist anyway. Doubt and questioning God ("Why, Lord? Why?") are not, in themselves, sin. This Psalm is usually associated with Jesus and his emotions and prayer in Gethsemane and on the Cross. Believing in God and His provident goodness over a life-time is still possible and not a contradiction. Actually, such faith demonstrates that God is working in the struggling Believer's heart. He Himself makes it possible. Believing in prayer and being persistent in prayer in spite of no seeming answer to it is both good and possible. God promises that He does hear and will respond in His own time. ("Ask, Seek and Knock") This Psalmist's faith and prayer life is a testimony to that and a witness to us that we can do likewise, if we suffer as he is. God still can and does use a Believer although he is not perfect or healthy and who struggles with darkness and terrors within. There have been many such Believers through the ages. Actually some of the best or most effective. These very sufferings are the furrowed ground in which God plants his seed. Often saints who suffer are the most spiritual and the most usable instrument in God's Hand. In fact, brokenness seems to be a prerequisite for personal holiness and serious ministry. Put all this together and we may say, "The Word of the Lord"! Thanks be to God!

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 10:06

Saturday, March 8, 2008

GOD'S TWO HANDS

Someone asked what I thought about the Lutheran concept of Two Kingdoms (God's Two hands). Here is my answer. There is only one Authority in the Universe- God Himself and all His authority has been given to Christ (Matt 28:18) The exercise of authority is government. All government, the exercise of authority as such, is good and is a gift to Humanity. See Rom 13:1-2 The absence of government or anarchy and chaos is not good. Christ delegates His authority and governs through the four specific governments of Husband in Marriage, Father or Parent in Family, Elder in Church and Ruler in the State. These are all servants of God, to do His will in their respective spheres of influence. (In actual practice, each or all of them may be rebellious and not intentionally serve God.)With due respect for Luther, the idea of Two Kingdoms, one civil and one spiritual is incorrect and misleading. It implies that one is better (the spiritual) and the other not good (worldly or even bad). That is not what Luther meant, but the concept fosters or lends support to a dualism that plagues Christianity and Christians, leading them to divide their lives into the spiritual and good versus the physical and carnal or sinful. And thinking that way undermines the truth that Christ is Lord of all and that all comes from God and exists for the glory of God. Dualism in turn leads people to divide their loyalties or priorities and justify choosing between the four governments (above), pitting one against the other. This is not good- again, see Rom 13:1-2

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 13:44

Friday, February 29, 2008

THE BIBLE FOR ALL IT IS WORTH

What follows below is a major 14 Part Series explaining what the Bible really is with Tips on how to (and how not to) read it and also explaining why Evangelicals often do not agree about what the Bible says and what can be done about that. Please read all 14 Parts before responding. Thanks. I really believe this material could be very helpful to many! May God bless you as you study it.- Cal

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:57

Part 1- WHAT IS THE WORD OF GOD?

According to Genesis 1 and John 1-In the beginning was God [and]... the Word Psalm 138:2...you [God] have exalted above all things your name and your word.We believe that a personal God exists and that His mind, thought and will have been expressed. That expression is the Greek word "Logos", translated as "Word"God and His Expression are inseparable, thus the Word is God. This is why the Word is eternal, unchanging and has absolute (highest and unconditional) authority in all matters which it addresses. The Word (God's self-expression) precedes and is the fountain and foundation of all human knowledge. As God is, so is His Word- ongoing, not static or closed, alive and active. Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active.

More than that, what God speaks becomes actualized. The Word creates; it brings to pass what God thinks or wills. This means His Word was and is effective, i.e. - The Word was and is the instrument by which God's purposes were, and still are, accomplished.Isaiah 55:11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.The Word of God was prior to everything, bringing all else into existence (this includes faith and repentance in the sinner).Psalm 33:6 By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. 7 He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; he puts the deeps in storehouses. 8 Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! 9 For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.Hebrews 11:3 By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.2 Peter 3:5 the earth was formed...by the word of GodHebrews 1:3 He upholds the universe by the word of His powerWhat God creates by His Word, in turn, reveals the Maker. It is revelation of Him. We can look at it or study it and learn of God; but the revelation is not the same as the Word of God. The Word created that which reveals God. For example, Creation is called The Book of "General (or Natural) Revelation" because studying it, we can discover the mind and intentions of God. Nature speaks of its Creator, albeit in a non-verbal, unwritten way. Nature is revelation, but it is not the Word of God, because the latter preceded Nature and created it.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:52

Part 2- PROPOSITIONAL REVELATION

God's mind is rational. Before the issue of "Truth", that many these days are eager to debate, comes the issue of Revelation and prior to that is the issue of the nature of God. God has a Mind (not only Love) and His Mind, His thoughts, are rational (logical). He has revealed this about Himself. God reveals Himself in non-verbal ways (His creative acts and His acts in History and the lives of people). God also expresses His mind, His knowledge, in a verbal, propositional, rational manner. His thoughts are communicable to human beings because humans are made to be like Him, i.e. - with minds that can receive and process verbal, propositional, rational (logical) thought. Thus Man theoretically can receive and know intellectually whatever of Himself God chooses to reveal to Man in that way. [The reality of a "fallen nature" or Original Sin within people impedes this process]

The thoughts of God were expressed to the Prophets (the Word came to them) and they passed those thoughts (the Word) on to their audience orally and in writing, using their own thought forms, vocabulary and styles. Those who heard or read the Prophets heard the Word of God through the words of those men.The thoughts and purposes of God were expressed in the teaching of Jesus. Those who heard Him learned the Word of God.The thoughts and purposes of God were expressed non-verbally in the person and life of Jesus. Those who observed Him saw the Word in action. He is rightly called the Living Word.The thoughts and purposes of God were expressed to the Apostles. The Word came to

them and they wrote it down in their own language and style. The non-verbal and the verbal (propositional, rational, communicable) thoughts of God that are expressed in Creation, through the preaching of the prophets and in the life and teaching of Jesus and through the preaching of the Apostles are eternal, unchanging true, infallible (totally trustworthy- never wrong) inerrant (without error) and absolute. Ultimately all these expressed thoughts of God, His Word, were written down, collected and incorporated as Scripture. Tradition identifies God's Word and the Scripture (the Bible), and calls the entire collection the written Word of God or Special Revelation. The early Church decided on the 66 "Books" that would be included between the covers. However it is misleading to say that the Bible itself is identical with the Word. It is the Word (God's thoughts expressed) in a man-made literary form. By reading Scripture, people can learn for themselves what God has revealed about Himself. God's Word is revealed through Scripture. The prime purpose of studying both General Revelation in Nature and Special, verbal Revelation in Scripture is to encounter what God has revealed and continues to reveal about Himself, His mind, intentions and purposes. Bible study must not be diminished and vitiated by making it a pursuit of trivia or data or proof texts or arguments. We must beware of confusing our mastery of the Bible's contents with actually knowing God (and mastering Him at that). We must beware of creating systems of interpretation (Confessions of Faith with multiple proof texts) and boxing "God" in theological categories and baptizing them all as God. Such endeavor smacks of great hubris and idolatry.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:49

Part 4- THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired (literally, "breathed out") by God. Using this text, Evangelicals traditionally have followed this logical argument: Inasmuch as the entire Bible is the very Word of God written (every word inspired- out breathed- by God) and God can not lie, the entire Bible must be true, meaning free from all error (inerrant) and incapable of error (infallible). This Statement must be re-examined. We said above that the Bible is not identical with the Word of God. God expressed His mind (His Word) to men. They in turn wrote down what they received from God. What they wrote reflected their limitations as human beings and was not perfect. Every word written was not inspired by God. However, what they wrote contained what God had told them.

God inspired various writers to put into writing various subjects, ideas, concepts, explanations and perspectives that would reveal or express and communicate His Mind, His thoughts, purposes, character, will and actions. The writers were free to use their own experiences, language, knowledge and resources in their writing. God did not dictate the actual words. Think of these men as artists and their writing as the creative process. Why did you put these words, these ideas, these feelings into words on paper? God told me to do it. He put it on my heart and mind to write- not the words, but the ideas. Every literary element of the Bible, all which is written, the vocabulary, style and form, is a human product. These human elements are used to communicate the Word of God. The Divine Word is conveyed by human words, but the two are not inseparable. Different human literary genres are used by the writers of the Bible. All Art (film, drama, poetry, fiction, music, dance, etc) offers insight into reality. All Art offers perspective on the human condition or experience and expresses world views, concepts and ideas. And the latter are separable and can exist apart from the specific art form used. God Himself makes it possible for people to receive and understand His Word as they read, study and meditate upon the human writing which is the Scripture in all these genres (poetry, history, narrative). Thus it can be accurately said, the entire finished product, the completed book, is the work of God Himself. He "out breathed" it by inspiring, informing and guiding the human writers, editors and compilers of the material. What I am proposing here fits what the Bible actually is as we have it in hand and explains how we can consider the Book to be the Word of God. All of it, the completed Book, is "useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2Tim 3:16-17 NIV) The entire Book is ideally and theoretically the ultimate written authority for our faith and practice as Christians. Inasmuch as God's Word, self-expression or self-revelation is incarnate in human form, we must look beyond the printed page and use all our skills and tools, intellectually and spiritually, to find the Treasure in the various genres of literature between the covers of the Book. We must find therein what God has shared of Himself. My major concern behind this Essay is my personal hunger for God and a passion to see Him known and glorified by all. I am concerned that God is being replaced by a concern for Doctrinal Correctness on one hand (especially by Reformed Believers) or by a heart for social activism (across a broad spectrum of contemporary, younger Evangelicals)

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:40

Part 5- THE WORD OF GOD IS THE GOSPEL

The most common use of the expression "Word of God" in the New Testament is as a name for the Gospel. The Apostles preached the Word, meaning they preached the Gospel, not the Bible. The Gospel is the Word about Christ, especially Christ crucified. That is the primary meaning of the "Word of God". In Acts, the phrase is used this way 11

times, saying the Word of God spread and people, hearing it, came to faith. The phrase "Word of God" is used 18 times in the Letters. It does not mean the Bible. The "Word of God" in the New Testament designates the Message of Christ, His death and resurrection, which God uses as an agent, the instrument, to call sinners to Christ, to convict them of their sin and bring them to repentance and saving faith in Christ. Again, the Word is not the Bible; if we are being Biblical in our use of that phrase, we will use it primarily to proclaim the Good News about Jesus.

Romans 1:15 I am eager to preach the Gospel... for I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes [it]. Romans 10:15 ... "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" 17 [for] faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of [about] Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:21 ... it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. ... We preach Christ crucified... Ephesians 1:13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel..., and believed in him, were sealed ... These verses have been popular through the years as proof texts used to support expository preaching, but in these texts, Paul does not say he is eager to preach the Bible. Faith does not come from hearing the Bible preached. God does not save through preaching itself, but through what is preached, particularly the Gospel. People must hear and believe in the Gospel to be saved. Expository preaching of Scripture which seeks to explain Book after Book, chapter and verse, is not the preaching Paul has in mind here. Not is teaching on what the Bible says about Marriage or Creation or Poverty what God uses to save people. Paul did not eagerly devote and endanger his life in order to preach anything other than the Gospel. The Bible has a lot to say about many subjects and it should be studied to learn what that is. But none of that is the power of God unto salvation. If salvation is the object (of preaching), the Gospel must be the subject! It is popular today to teach that the Gospel is primarily about the Kingdom, but the Kingdom is only part of the Gospel. The Gospel as the Apostles understood and used the word is the Message (what we would might call a "Stump Speech") about Jesus, particularly about His life, death, resurrection and ascension. All are related to the Kingdom, but the part is not the whole and without the death, resurrection and ascension there could be no Kingdom at all. Many insist the Word of God is Christ Himself, not the Message about Christ. But we must not reduce the Gospel about Christ to Christ Himself. Yes, a few verses in the first chapter of John do call Jesus the Word. This is not the common, normative Scriptural use of the phrase, Word of God. Its usage in these few verses is simply saying that Jesus, in his person, reveals God. Look at Jesus, it is said and see God. Actually, it means look at Jesus and see God at work, again, in the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. All these are the acts of God that reveal God. The tendency among those who identify the Gospel with Jesus is to project their interpretation of who He is (Rabbi, Healer, Radical Revolutionary) is then to project their personal interpretation of on to Jesus, declaring that He (as they see Him) is who the Gospel is about.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:35

Part 6- THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

The authority of Scripture and its primacy in effecting faith and salvation is the dominant mark of Evangelical Christianity. The dominant mark of Catholic Christianity is the primacy of the Sacraments. While the dominant mark of old-line ("mainline") Christianity is the primacy of the heart or faith (neither Word nor Sacrament) The key issue here is Interpretation. Evangelicals agree that the Bible is their ultimate written authority in matters of faith and practice. We disagree on how to interpret and use this authority. How do we determine what it says?

Luke 24:45 [Jesus] opened their minds to understand the Scriptures John 16:13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth We all believe the Holy Spirit within us and within our Faith Community is essential to give understanding of what we read in the Bible. This is called Illumination. However, we also all believe what we think the Spirit is saying to us must be tested by the text. The written Word and the inner Word must be in harmony and when in doubt the written Word takes precedence. Acts 17:11 Now the Bereans ... received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures [Hebrew Scriptures] every day to see if what Paul said [the Gospel] was true. John 10:34 Jesus answered them, "... 35 Scripture cannot be broken" cf Isaiah 8:20 To the law and to the testimony [the Scriptures]! If they [various voices] do not speak according to this word, they have no light....

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:32

Part 7- IS THE BIBLE TRUE?

The statement, "God can not lie" is itself true! I affirm the reality of the Author and of His original intent and that both are without error. I affirm the necessity of the text as written and that it has its own meaning. I affirm the importance of both the Author's intent and the reader's interpretation of the text. I acknowledge that the reader's interpretation is biased by [his] very personal experiences and may have serious error, but I deny completely that the reader replaces or takes precedence over either the text or Author.

"Truth" is normally defined as that which either corresponds to reality or is coherent and consistent with other matters that are accepted as true by the reader. Something is "not true" if it does not correspond to reality or is not coherent with experience. Evangelicals have traditionally chosen the first definition of truth: Correspondence, whereas the second definition is more popular and common. A third and increasingly popular definition is that "Truth" is personal and relational and is not propositional at all. A word used as a common synonym is "authentic" or "real"- the opposite of phony, superficial or hypocritical. These words are not usually defined ("I know it when I see it- or feel it."). It is a very, very sad that so many young people say that their attitudes and their choice of this third meaning of "truth" comes from their experiences growing up in Christian families and churches. I believe common sense alone indicates the necessity and value of absolutes and certainties, as well as rationality and logic. Try to build bridges and airplanes without them. To reply that absolutes and certainties (that kind of truth) are acceptable for physical science, but not for human relationships or spirituality (or any of the so-called soft sciences) is two-story or dualistic thinking that separates fact from value, faith from reason, and places all things having to do with God, in the realm of the irrational and subjective (another kind of truth). That ultimately leads to the ennui, despair and nihilism common among today's younger generation. I am staying with the traditional definition: Truth is correspondence with reality. My faith is that God and His Word is reality. The Biblical world view (Biblical answers to the Great Questions about who we are as human beings, where we came from, why we are here and where we are going and how we get there) offers Reality. Everything that corresponds to God and what He has revealed of Himself (His Word) is true. Everything that corresponds with the Biblical World View is true. God expresses His Mind. Whatever he thinks, plans and wills is the standard for all else. It is true. God can not lie because He can not change. He must be who He is. He can not contradict Himself. He must be consistent with Himself. He is true. (the second definition of the word). Therefore, whatever corresponds to Him is also "True". Whatever does not correspond to Him is not true, is error or false. This is the yardstick for measuring the Bible. Where it corresponds to God it is true and thus inerrant. Inerrancy is not about accuracy of dates, chronologies or genealogies or certain textual errors. They exist. Inerrancy is about faithfulness to the Word of God, to His self-revelation.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:29

Part 8- THREE VIEWS IF INERRANCY

A.) INERRANCY IS ALL INCLUSIVE 2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is inspired [literally "breathed out"] by God The Word of God is inclusive of all kinds of subjects. It is a false dichotomy to pit Salvific Doctrine (the Core Gospel or Truths essential to personal Salvation) against historical, geographical, and scientific data, as well as political, economic and social matters. God has expressed His mind (revealed Himself) on and through all these topics and Doctrine or Christian Teaching includes them. Moses writes of history and laws. David records his own prayers and songs. Isaiah writes prophecies. Mark writes a "gospel" and Paul writes doctrinal and pastoral letters. All of these have been edited into the form we have today. They use quotes from Hebrew Scripture (in both a Hebrew and a Greek translation), both literally and allegorically and often as proof texts out of context. Vocabularies and styles vary greatly. All of that is human.

But God put the concepts, interpretations of life and events, present and future, and many truths on the hearts of the various writers and inspired each to put pen to paper, expressing the mind of God, using available resources. The final total product, not just the so-called "doctrinal parts", is true and inerrant. All Scripture ultimately corresponds to Reality. Therefore, all Scripture (Scripture as a whole) is inerrant. So often I have wondered about sections of the Psalms. How could these words, these attitudes, often barbaric and definitely not Christian, be inspired by God? Most of them are very personal prayers spoken to God, not words spoken by God. Yet, God uses those Psalms in toto (all the Scripture) to do His work in me. He speaks to me through every text. Those Psalms become (are) His Word to me - His agent or instrument to achieve His purpose in me and every one else.

B.) INERRANCY IS LIMITED
2 Timothy 3:16 [Some] Scripture is inspired by God. [See above] C.) THE SCRIPTURE IS NOT INERRANT AT ALL All Scripture was composed and compiled, edited and redited over much time by various faith communities and reflects their times and circumstances. Over a period of three or four centuries, the Bible as we know it was authorized and canonized by official Church Councils. The Spirit was supposedly at work in this process, but the Bible is the Church's Book and is neither inerrant nor infallible. Our View of Inerrancy determines our view of the Bible's Authority: In Position A, the Authority of the Bible extends to all of life, even as the Sovereignty of Christ does. In Position B, the Authority of the Bible applies only to matters of Faith, i.e.- the Core Gospel or Doctrines essential to personal Salvation. In Position C, the Authority of the Bible has been effectively rejected altogether. Any authority the Bible may have is given to it by the Church and may be taken away by the Church. It is the Church's Book. Positions B and C are often taken by Evangelicals in matters of morals and ethics, public policy, government and economics. Differing views about inerrancy within the same church or Christian organization will eventually lead to divergent positions on politics and social issues. All of this is related to Interpretation. What we believe the Bible to be influences what we believe the Bible says. Those who believe the entire Book is of God interpret and apply it very differently than those who see only some

or none of as coming from Him. There is another reason why Evangelicals disagree with each other over what the Bible means. [next-]

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:22

Part 9- THE MISTAKE OF EMPHASIZING SECTIONS OR VERSES

Evangelicals tend to emphasize only sections of the Bible or, worse, only select verses. Many Evangelicals do not study the entire Bible systematically. What they believe it teaches depends almost exclusively on what they are taught as new or young Christians. Those basic texts, those favorite doctrines, not the entire Bible, circumscribe their faith and behavior as Christians. Simple as that. A dozen years and many dozen "Bible studies" later, they are still in the same place.

As we have written above, the Bible is a collection of different types of literature, composed over centuries by many different writers for many different reasons. The Bible is not a single book, but actually 66 "books". Nevertheless, there is unity and harmony within those "books" from first to last. It is internally consistent, never contradictory- all evidence of One Author. This means single passages must not only be read within their immediate context, but must be interpreted in light of the entire Book. Single verses may be difficult or seem to be contradictory. The reader must learn to see how all verses fit together. Among other things, this will eliminate troublesome proof-texting. We have written above that the authority of the entire Bible extends over all of life- not only the Law or the Prophets or the Wisdom Literature or Prophecies or the New Testament or the Gospels or the Letter of Paul. If we persist in giving primacy to one section of the Bible over all others, we greatly alter what the Bible can say to us. We are actually showing disrespect to those other sections of God's Word, effectively telling God that some of His Word is unimportant to us.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:56

Part 10- READING THE BIBLE THROUGH GRIDS

Evangelicals disagree on what the Bible means because we look at the same Book through different "grids"-networks of interlocking presuppositions. Inasmuch as the content of the Bible is not presented in a clear-cut specific, systematic order, Evangelicals, fit verses together in different ways according to the grid they are using.

Over the course of Church History, three or four major systems for organizing texts of the Scripture have been developed into several theological systems and each has its current adherents who view the Bible and Christian life from that system (which they have grown up with or have learned from their faith community or favorite Bible Teacher or spiritual mentor). These systems cross denominational lines today and elements of Calvinism, Arminianism, and Catholicism along with Reformed Covenantalism, Dispensationalism, Anabaptism, pietism and pentecostalism are intermingled. The increasingly popular practice is every person borrowing from the major systems, mixing and matching elements of each, to make their own, usually internally inconsistent or contradictory personal system. When Evangelicals insist the Bible is their authority for faith and practice, they really mean: the "Bible-as-understood-according-to-my-theological-system" is my authority. It is impossible to be simply an "Evangelical" or a Christian "only". All need to recognize this and be up front about where they are coming from theologically. It is because we use different systems or grids when we approach Scripture, equally serious and sincere evangelical Christians hold different views about many subjects, e.g.- the value of the Mosaic Law, the application today of the Sermon on the Mount, war and pacifism, the role of government and the courts, the nature of the Kingdom and the Church, the nature of Man and Salvation, and even the meaning of the Cross and Christ Himself.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:52

Part 11- COMING OUT OF THE BIBLE WHERE WE GO IN

Readers who go into the Bible through the Gospel of John tend to hold a view of Salvation different than those who enter the Bible through the Book of Romans. Readers who focus on the person and teaching of Jesus found in Matthew, Mark and Luke will usually have a different understanding of what it means to be a Christian than those who start with either John or Paul. I am especially concerned with the growing number of those Evangelicals who are supporting their

desire for social activism with an appeal to the person of Jesus they believe they have found in the synoptic Gospels.

They insist on the centrality of the life and teaching of Jesus as their primary authority, rather than the whole Bible, but what we know of Jesus depends entirely on the Apostles. Jesus himself wrote nothing. The New Testament letters written by Paul came first. Galatians 48 AD, Thessalonians late 50 AD, First Corinthians Spring 54 AD, Philippians late 54 AD, Second Corinthians 56 AD, Romans early 57 AD, Colossians Philemon Ephesians 60-61 AD, Pastorals 62-65 AD. Much later, other Apostles (or their representatives, "apostolic men") wrote what are called the Gospels (referring to a literary genre, not to "The Gospel"). The Writers incorporated what was known of Jesus' life and sayings according to the theological purpose of each Writer. What they wrote are not biographies of Jesus. They did this over the 30-70 years after the crucifixion [33 AD], primarily for the benefit of Believers and local churches: Mark and Luke may have been written 60-65, Matthew 80-100 and John 90-110 AD [all debatable]. The person of Jesus is a "nose of wax". Through the Centuries, "Jesus" has been shaped and reshaped in a dozen ways according to the theological or social fashions of the times. (See Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus through the Centuries*) Increasingly I hear young Evangelicals insist that the Gospel is about the Kingdom and a call to discipleship. The Kingdom, they say, is about love, peace and social-economic justice. Discipleship is about following Jesus' example and teaching about suffering servanthood and ministering to the marginalized of society. The Church was born in response to the sermons preached by the Apostles as recorded in ACTS. What the Apostles preached was The Gospel. The set content of the Gospel (known technically as the kerygma) focused on the death, burial, resurrection and ascension of Jesus for our salvation. This "Gospel" is reflected in the so-called Apostles Creed and later in the Nicene Creed. It is the Message passed on ("traditioned") from Paul to Timothy and was meant to be passed on again from generation to generation. (See 2 Timothy 1:8-14, 2:2) People believed this apostolic Gospel and were saved.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:45

Part 12- THE IMPORTANCE OF HERMENEUTICS

How do Evangelicals who are serious about their faith and living a Christian life come to such different understandings of the Gospel and Christian living? I have explained some of the major reasons above. There is yet another: All who agree on the authority of the Bible can come to very different interpretation of what it says because they use different rules to interpret it. Hermeneutics is the study of the principles by which we interpret the Bible.

Nehemiah 8:7 [Ezra and other Elders] helped the people to understand the Law...8 They read from the book, ...clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading. Ezra and the Elders were doing hermeneutics. What rules did they use? "They gave the sense" of the words that had first been clearly read. Acts 8:28 he [the Ethiopian] was reading the prophet Isaiah. 30 Philip... heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. 34 And the eunuch said to Philip, "About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him... about Jesus. Philip is doing hermeneutics. He asked the question, "Do you understand what you have read?" Philip helps the reader start from the text and discover the writer's intent. Hermeneutics provides the tools to help people understand the meaning of Scripture. What did the writer mean? What was his intent? What was the meaning of the Text for the original readers (hearers- Scripture was written to be read aloud)? What does the Text mean for us today? It had become common in recent years to focus on the historical, cultural (sociological), political, economic context of both the original writer and reader to determine "meaning". It has become even more common to focus more on today's readers. All that counts in doing "Bible study" is what the text means in my situation- what it does for me, what I get out of it regardless of what the original intent or understanding (the writer or his text). While Evangelicals today are mindful of these factors and how influential they all are, the traditional approach is still fundamental.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:33

Part 13- THE HISTORICAL-GRAMMATICAL METHOD

Because Evangelicals believe that God has revealed Himself and that this Revelation is objective and unchanging and because we believe that this Revelation, the Word of God, is rational, verbal and propositional and contained and conveyed within the words of the entire Bible, in its original manuscripts, several things follow-

Evangelicals are very interested in recovering and preserving the original manuscripts. Evangelicals specialize in Textual Criticism for this reason. We study the original Biblical languages. We use scholarly tools to determine the content of the original documents. We care about the transmission of those documents through various versions and

translations over the centuries. We are committed to modern versions and translations that both preserve the meaning of the original language and content as much as is humanly possible. (One of the reasons most of us no longer use the KJV) We do this knowing how language itself changes in translation and usage (another reason most of us no longer use the KJV) This is why we rely on "word-for-word" versions of the Bible (NAS, ESV), as well as "meaning for meaning" translations (NLT) and paraphrases (The Message) However, we know we are influenced by contemporary values and personal biases when we come to the Bible. Some one who is fascinated by the City or the Poor or Racism or Missions or the End Times will find all kinds of passages that are relevant to those interests in the Bible- or more accurately, will interpret all kinds of passages in the light of those interests brought to their reading of the Bible. Someone with other interests will tend not see these topics in the Book. Someone who is depressed or struggling with tragedy or marriage or money problems or seeking forgiveness of sins and assurance of Eternal Life will come to the Bible and read it with these issues in mind. Someone who is an Artist or a Scientist or an "Intellectual" or a CEO of a large business who has traveled extensively will certainly approach the Bible differently than those who have limited formal education or life experiences. People of various age and ethnic groups from various parts of the world, speaking different languages, extremely poor or extremely wealthy, people with power and those without bring different expectations and assumptions to their Bible study. All of that is another reason the Evangelical will persist in the historical-grammatical method of interpretation. If a reader believes all these variables and influences and biases make objectivity impossible, for the original writers and readers as well as himself, the effort to understand any book is completely undermined. The would-be reader is left with total skepticism.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:18

Part 14- THE HISTORICAL-GRAMMATICAL METHOD (continued)

The historical-grammatical method is a good bulwark against this outcome. It enables the reader to recognize personal bias and resist subjectivity when we study the Bible- if we use it! Here are the basic rules: 1. Seek the original words 2. ...in their original settings (sentences and paragraphs) and context (immediate, larger and ultimately the entire Bible) 3. ...taking those words at their original, common sense face value, following time-tested grammatical structure and usage, according to genre. We can not properly interpret Scripture without understanding types of literature: poetry, history, apocalyptic, prophecy, etc Each one has different sets of rules for interpretation. This applies to the original languages as well as to the language being used today. The student also needs to understand figures of speech, grammar and sentence structure, modifiers, diagramming, etc. (English Major stuff)

Readers must also beware of so-called "word-studies". Often these are not academically (linguistically) sound and are but another form of proof texting. However, securing accurate definitions of all words, as they are used in a specific text (both originally and in translation), is essential to interpreting the text well. 4. Finally, test tentative conclusions using Reason and reputable scholarship. A good Library is essential. Tradition- the understanding of the passage in question in the Church catholic through out the Ages Testimony of the Holy Spirit within the reader (having the Spirit, being a Believer, is the first requirement for understanding the Word of God) and within the reader's faith-community. All three of these standards are absolutely essential in determining what the Bible means and what God is revealing to the reader. But they must be kept in this order, never reversing them as has become common today. Simply accepting the opinion of our Church Leaders or favorite Teachers and mentors is not good. Our ultimate object in approaching the Bible, is not to understand the printed page, but what is beyond it. God awaits to reveal Himself to us and receiving that revelation is our ultimate goal. The writers of the Bible manuscripts are long gone, but the Author remains. It is Him we seek. When we open the Book, our prayer always must be, "Speak, Lord, for your servant listens"- 1 Samuel 3:9

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 12:45

Tuesday, February 12, 2008

ONE OF THE MOST MISUSED TEXTS IN THE BIBLE

Matthew 25:31-46 This popular text is one of the most misunderstood and misused passages in the Bible. As an example, here is how Ron Sider uses it: [Jesus] "warned his followers in the strongest possible words that those who do not feed the hungry, clothe the naked and visit prisoners will experience eternal damnation (Mat 25:31-46) - p.66 "Only as we feel the presence of [Jesus] in the form of a poor [man] can we understand his words: I was hungry and you gave me food ... (Mt 25:35-40) What does it mean to feed and clothe the Creator of all things? We can not know. We can only look at the poor ... with new eyes and resolve to heal their hurts and help end their oppression. Jesus saying (in Mat 25:45) is terrifying. "Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to the least of these, you did it not to me. What does that mean in a world where millions die each year while rich Christians live in affluence? What does it mean to see the Lord of the universe lying by the roadside starving and walk by on the other side. We cannot know. We can only pledge...not to kill him again."-p.69 Christ clearly taught that failure to feed the poor entails eternal damnation (Mt 25:45-46) -p.56

Jesus was even more blunt and sharp. To those who do not feed the hungry, clothe the naked and visit the prisoners, he will speak a terrifying word at the final Judgment: Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the Devil and his angels (Mt 25:41) The meaning is clear and unambiguous. Jesus intends that his disciples imitate his own special concern for the poor and needy. Those who disobey will experience eternal damnation. - p.82 These are all quotes from Ron Sider's book, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* (1st edition, 1977) That Christians are to care for those who are really poor (as the Bible defines "poor") is absolutely true; but this common use of Matthew 25, illustrated by Sider, is in error! I have written about this before, but the topic continues to pop up, so I will address it again. My References: Matthew, Evangelist and Teacher by RT France, Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew by Craig Keener, Matthew, a Commentary by Robert Gundry, plus other scholars. Matt 25:31-46 is a passage that asks and answers the Question: Who shall be saved? The entire Bible makes it clear that salvation is entirely a matter of grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Salvation is not based on our good works of any kind. The common interpretation of Matt 25:31-46 would lead us to believe that it is. Here is an overview of what the text teaches-1. There will be a Second Coming of Christ: the Son of Man is coming again in glory. v.31 Jesus said, 'When the Son of Man comes in his glory2. There is Judgment Day for all peoples. Jesus will be the Judge. When He comes in glory, all the billions of people who have ever lived on earth will be gathered before Him for His Judgment. v.31b then he will sit on the throne of his glory3. Jesus will divide the Peoples into two groups: Sheep and Goats v.32 ... and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left.4. There is a Kingdom [Heaven] and there is a Hell. The latter is place of fire or punishment and that is eternal. Some go into the Kingdom and all others go to Hell. Which destiny is not determined by social activism or the lack thereof. The answer to the question: "What must I do to be saved" is not "Feed the Hungry"! v. 34 Then the king will say to those at his right hand, - [the Sheep] "Come, ... inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; v. 41 Then he will say to those at his left hand, "...depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; v. 46 And [the Goats people] will go away into eternal punishment, but the [Sheep people] into eternal life.' 5. The Basis of Judgment is whether or not people love and serve Jesus Christ. v. 35 [to the Sheep:] for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me." ... v. 42 [to the Goats:] for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." 6. How can people show they love and want to serve Christ? God did not create or intend Hell for people, but for the Devil and his angels. People are sent there by Christ because they did not care for the "least of his brothers". People who did care for the least of his brothers are saved and go into Heaven. By doing this they demonstrate that they love the Lord! v.40- "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me." v. 45 "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me." 7. The crucial Question: who are "the least of these brothers of Jesus"? Are they the hungry, sick and homeless we might find on the streets of our cities? Are they all the people defined by our Government as the Poor? Is caring for them the way to our salvation? Will we go to Hell if we do not care for them? The "least brothers of Jesus" are Believers, particularly the Apostles and other disciples spreading the Gospel and suffering because of that. We learn this by considering how the relevant phrases from our passage are used in other places by Matthew. Matthew 18:6 But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. 14 In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost. Cf Lk 17:2, Mk 9:42 Matthew 10:42 And if anyone gives even a cup

of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward. cf Mk 9:41 I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward. cf Luke 8: 21 He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice." cf Mk 3:33, Matt 12:48 Matthew 25:40 "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' cf 28:10 Cf Mk 9:42, John 20:17 Matthew 18:3 And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven 5 And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. 6 But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. 10 See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. The hungry and naked (etc) in Matthew 25 are not the millions of people starving in Africa or anywhere else. First, Jesus Christ is not incarnate in the world's Poor. The Spirit of Christ indwells those (and only those) who have been justified by faith (Second, no one is related to Jesus, a brother or other member of his family, based on social-economic status. The brothers of Jesus are those who have been adopted by the Father on the basis that they are in union with His Son by their saving faith (Gal.3:26-4:7). They are those (only) who obey God's Word - not the millions who do not do that, rich or poor. The Brothers who obey the great Commission often had to suffer great deprivation, hardship and imprisonment. Jesus warned the Apostles of that very thing. And of course, the experience of the Apostle Paul demonstrates it. This Passage (Mt 25) is to encourage people to help such Brothers in their need. Many examples are found in Acts. Heb 10:32 Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. 33 Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. 34 You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. Those who refuse to help Brothers in need reveal that they are against Christ and the Gospel about Him. That being the case, they perish in Hell. cf 2 Thes 1:8, 2:10b, 1 Peter 4:1 Jesus had said, "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. 41 Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. -Matthew 10:40 cf 18:5 It is interesting that neither Sheep nor Goats knew that they were serving Jesus when they helped the Apostles or, on the other hand, were not serving Him when they refused to help the Apostles or other Christian workers. But they were. John 13:20 I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me." Luke 10:16 "He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me." cf Acts 9:1 and 4-5 When Saul persecuted the Church, he did not realize that he was persecuting Christ. That Jesus loves the poor (and the rich) is true. That Christians should love the poor (and the rich) is also true. However, it is error to identify Jesus with the Poor of the world. They are not His Body. Jesus does not indwell the Poor of the world; He definitely does indwell His Church. That is His Body. That we should make caring for suffering brothers and sisters in Christ, His Body, particularly those members who are suffering because they are working to spread the Gospel is the third major point of this text. That we serve Christ when we do this is the second point. That those who serve Christ go to Heaven is the first point of Matthew 25:31-46

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 20:24

Thursday, February 7, 2008

BIBLICAL PLAYBOOK FOR POLITICS

I have been trying to find a way to understand how Society is supposed to work. There are so many disparate views and no end to theories and ideologies. There are so many pieces to the puzzle- how do they all fit together? Are they supposed to fit together? What does the Bible say? Has God revealed His Plan for our social, economic and political world. Certainly, all the candidates vying for our votes are offering all kinds of proposals for change. Change from what to what? Change for better or worse? According to whom and why? What standards apply? Is there a Biblical "Blueprint" for all of this? Most Christians would say there is not. We all must work it out on our own. How do we do that? We do not agree, as Bible believing Christians, on what is best or what is best for our Nation. Falling back on being Conservative (or a neo-con) or a Libertarian or a Republican is woefully inadequate. These are secular and do not offer God or Christ-centered or Biblical answers to our questions. We are talking Biblical World View here, not the world's view sans Scripture. In my search for a system of thought that I am persuaded is both Biblical and makes the most sense, I have come upon neo-Calvinism. I definitely have not found any help with this quest in contemporary Evangelicalism. The Essay that follows is part of my attempt to work out and apply concepts of neo-Calvinism that relate to our public life. I have explained what "neo-Calvinism" itself is at <http://www.calvinfox.com>

One of the most important values we share in our society is the importance of the individual, especially the individual's freedom of conscience and choice. However, today's Western, American understanding of the "Individual" is neither Scriptural nor Reformed. Every of us has infinite worth, not because of our potential, what we may do in life or may contribute to Society, but because of what we are as human beings. That is an extremely important concept with many consequences. We each share the same human nature and that nature images God's nature. We are like God inasmuch as we are rational, creative, moral and spiritual beings. We are also like God inasmuch as we are communal by nature. We are created with the ability and need to live with others- to live in community, even as God the Father, Son and Spirit do. We were never intended by our Creator to be solitary, autonomous, self-determined individuals. Rather we can find and develop our individuality, our life as a person, when we live in community. We become and fulfill what God created and gifted and called each of us to be, only when we live in relationships with others. That is the absolute prerequisite context for all consideration of "Human Rights". Our rights are rights only within relationships. And the relationships or communities are not of the individuals choosing or design. All of us are intended by God to live within social systems or relationships of His design, as part of Creation itself. These social systems or communities are part of Creation or the order that began with creation, hence- "creational" (they are designated as Spheres in neo-Calvinist social thought) are not meant to be aggregates of individuals who voluntarily associate in ways and times they each deem important to meet their respective individual needs or purposes. There are three basic creational communities or spheres. Each of these has specific functions and norms or boundaries. They are permanent inter-relational communities or spheres, even though the forms they take and the actual members at any specific time and place may vary. Each Sphere has its own inner working or system, with members fulfilling various functions or roles. Marriage and Family Individual men and women are meant to live together as husband and wife, as "one flesh", i.e.- in a committed, covenant relationship. They are to be as fruitful as possible, i.e.- have children and all of them together are to be a family: Community". When sons marry, he and his wife begin another family, but these family units together are intended to be an extended family, always responsible for each other. Church (the organization) Families assemble and share their lives together as a Covenant Community of Faith (aka church) NOTE: Voluntary, temporary relationships and communities of unrelated individuals are not Scriptural substitutes for Marriage, Family or Church. Civic Associations The primary function of the three basic Spheres is to act as God's agent in he world, obeying God's mandate to fill the earth, care for it and continue His work of cultivating it for the common good of all. (This is called the Cultural Mandate, an important neo-Calvinist concept) To this end, other Spheres will naturally arise- voluntary associations for work, production and distribution of goods and services (Businesses). Other associations will arise for Education, Communication, the Arts and Recreation. None of these Covenantal Communities, which actually are extensions of the original Marriage, Family and Church Spheres, are autonomous either. They must cooperate with each others and function according to the laws of God, accountable to Him. Civil Government Because all the individuals involved in all the creational social systems are sinners, there will be injustice- transgressions of God's Laws. As systems, the Spheres may well malfunction or fail in their respective responsibilities. The main function of Civil Government is to control or stop such transgression wherever it may occur [Law and Order]. It is the civil government's responsibility to see to it that everyone "plays by the rules"- God's rules. Biblical commands apply to marriage, family, property, work, money, care of the poor, care of animals and the environment, criminal justice and civil government. The faith that saves is the faith that obeys the Law of God in all such matters. The Civil Government that is good enforces these universal Laws. It is to pass and enforce legislation and laws specific to our Society to that end. In

general, the civil government of any particular Nation is to pass and support laws that guarantee the following God-given Human Rights-1. The Right to Worship the Triune God and honor and respect His Name and Day2. The Right to live. No person has the right to deprive another person of life or of anything essential to living. Conversely, every person has the responsibility to live 3. The Right to work and to periodically rest from work. Everyone has the responsibility to work, i.e.- to work for the development, procurement and equitable distribution of the necessities needed to sustain life, for self and for others4. All men and women have the right to marry and produce children. Husbands and wives have a right to the mutual fidelity of their spouses. NOTE: the use of "men and women" here is based on the Biblical definition of Marriage which is the prerequisite for procreation. By that definition (Genesis 2:18-24, Matthew 19:4-6), homosexuals do not have a God-given "right" to either marriage or children 5. Parents have the right to be honored, respected and obeyed by their children. Children have the right to provision, protection and education from their parentsExtended family members have the right to receive shelter and support from other family members in times of disaster or extreme hardship6. Property owners have a right to their property7. Neighbors have a right to their privacy8. People have a right to a fair and honest trialThese are the most fundamental Human Rights and Responsibilities. They are "inalienable". In order to have a realistic opportunity to actualize them, there is a logical, concomitant Essential: Freedom. All human beings must have political and economic and social freedom, opportunity and security to enable them to exercise these rights and responsibilities. It is the responsibility of Civil Government to see to it that they do have that freedom.Stewardship, Sharing, Work and Growth are four fundamental economic principles from Creation [Gen 1-2] Stewardship is the dominant Biblical economic concept. God, as Creator, is ultimately owner of all created things. Any claim to ownership ("private property") by human beings collectively or individually, is conditional- never absolute. God, as Creator, has given responsibility for the management (stewardship) of His created world (the environment, our ecosystem, including all living creatures and natural resources), to human beings. They are to care, cultivate, preserve and use all of it for Him or as He directs. See Psalm 24:1 and 115:16 and 8:3-8.Sharing, by all for all, is essential. Life is paramount! All creation is intended by God for the sustenance of all living creatures. All natural resources are to be available to all by all. All end products of economic processes are to be available to all and shared by all. All able people have the right and responsibility to work, to be engaged in the production and distribution of goods and services. This is the "fill and subdue" commandment.Growth is the fourth Biblical economic principle. This is the "be fruitful and multiply" commandment. Growth in population (be fruitful) requires growth in economic production (multiply). This is to be desired and expected. Such growth of population and production will result in both scarcity and surplus of goods and services. This, in turn, leads to exchange and trade, governed by supply and demand. Stewardship, Sharing, Work and Growth are all good things, sanctioned and mandated by the Bible, by God himself. It is the responsibility of Civil Government to guarantee these fundamental, universal principles for all. The Church is to remind Civil Government that its duty is to serve God and that it is not autonomous or absolute. It labors under God's Law and is accountable to Him. There is another neo-Calvinist Principle that is extremely important. Each Creational social system has its own authority (known as "sphere sovereignty" to neo-Calvinists), but none of them are absolute or autonomous. They cooperate and must not interfere with each other's responsibilities. That especially applies to Civil Government. It is not to usurp or curtail the responsibilities of the other Spheres. There are serious consequences of this Doctrine of Sphere Sovereignty. For example, the education of children is the right and responsibility of their parents. The State can never rightfully (in God's eyes) claim that children belong to it or that it is the State's right and duty to educate children against the will of their parents. Parents are not to acquiesce to this claim by the State or relinquish their privilege and duty to educate their children or their responsibility to see to it that they are educated by the State in a way acceptable to them, the Parents.This Doctrine should lead Christian parents, at the very least, to become involved on local school boards, in the selection of curriculum (subjects taught) and text books. It should lead many of them to become professional educators, who will promote and teach Biblical values in State schools. This Doctrine also leads to the support of Home Schooling, Parochial Schools or the use of Vouchers (tax money) for school choice. The Family, as part of their duty to educate their children, has the responsibility to teach (or see to it that the State teaches) work or vocational skills. People who can, but do not work, do not eat; that is Biblical, but more than that, working is a God-given duty, a commandment, laid upon all to support themselves and their extended family, including the truly poor in it and to help fulfill the Cultural mandate.The State has no business to interfere with the responsibility of all able people to work and be self-supporting or to care for those who refuse to do so. This Doctrine of Sphere Sovereignty gives the responsibility for welfare and the care of the sick, the widowed and orphaned, the unemployed and the homeless to the Family and Faith Community (Church) and to the local civic community. The State has no business to interfere with or usurp these God-given responsibilities nor to take money (taxes) from citizens for programs that do. Calvinists oppose the concept and common practices of what is commonly known as the "Welfare State" and they are very suspicious of all entitlement programs and oppose the popular entitlement mentality.The voluntary Civic Associations are not to forego their independence and look to the civil government for support. These groups, whether for business or the arts, are extensions of the Family and Church. The State has no right to interfere with them in any way. In practice, this Doctrine leads to a rejection of many "tax breaks", as well as much government funding and most subsidies. In our Society, it means advocating for privatization of just about everything. The Faith Community or Church also has its God-given privileges and responsibilities which include public corporate worship and evangelism, as well as its ministries of charity. The Civil Government has no lawful right to abridge or interfere with the Church in these duties. Conversely, the Church has no business seeking to get the State to do the work of the Church, such as enforcing morality (all of this is the

original intent of the First Amendment). The only legitimate, God-given responsibility for Civil Government is enactment of Law (laws in harmony with the principles of Biblical Law), Law enforcement, Courts and a legal system guaranteeing due process- all to maintain peace and to protect citizens (and the Nation) from injustice, physical harm and danger from any quarter. The latter includes maintaining and using Armed Forces. Taxing the people for this is not theft. It is the obligation of citizens to pay for such services. This has been a simple treatment of key neo-Calvinist concepts that I believe are Biblical and offer a reasonable approach for Christians to use in trying to address issues raised in this Election year- a Biblical Playbook for Politics.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 16:30

OTHER DOCTRINES ESSENTIAL TO OUR VIEW OF GOVERNMENT

More fundamental than the Doctrine of Sphere Sovereignty, Neo-Calvinists, being in the Reformed Tradition, also hold to other Biblical Doctrines which greatly influence their politics. Prime among them is the Total (or Radical) Depravity of Human Beings. This Doctrine leads to the emphasis on the negative role of Civil Government. That is usually understood to mean a focus on Civil Government's authority to use the sword (Romans 13:4). It also means there is among the Reformed a serious mistrust of all those in power in any particular administration, because people who rule are also fallen sinners.

Civil Government itself is good and essential, ordained by God. And undoubtedly men and women of great principles and intentions are (and always have been) active in our Civil Government, However, we take seriously Lord Acton's dictum, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men." - or they may very well become bad men. Therefore, Reformed Christians are strong advocates of both the Rule of Law to which every one is subordinate and a real division of governmental powers, wherein there will always be a system of checks and balances to inhibit the government (those who run it) from becoming or remaining an instrument of evil. I can not underscore our apprehension of this possibility enough, in this day and age of State Worship. It is a major factor in how I personally interpret what elected Leaders and other Authorities say and which Government actions I support. I tend to be seriously suspicious and skeptical about the promises and pronouncements of all Politicians, Left and Right. It is because I believe in Original Sin. Finally, Calvinists also believe from Scripture that there is a contract or covenant between the those who govern and those who are governed. This means government requires the consent of the governed and it means the right of the latter to rebel when the contract has been broken. The Reformed Christian is very much concerned with the possibility of tyrants and tyrannical rule or totalitarianism, in which the State becomes God and takes over total control of the minds and lives of its citizens. Thus, we are very much opposed to an ever growing government and in favor of an ever decreasing government presence in our Nation. This, of course, flies against the current trends and practices of Civil Government in the United States and the apparent desire and beliefs of many of our politicians and citizens today, especially the so-called Progressives and Left-leaning Liberals among us and those citizens, including millions of Christians, who demand cradle to grave provision and security from their Government. Scripture puts all of us on notice that this is not the will of God. There is much more on all of this at my Website <http://www.calvinfox.com/web/>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 16:23

Monday, December 10, 2007

PREPARING FOR THE ADVENT OF CHRIST

My Understanding of the End Times (Eschatology) Thinking about the End Times, for many, takes back seat to pressing issues of the present time. That is a serious mistake, because how we view the present time, and live in it, is greatly influenced (even determined) by our view of those End Times! Actually, we should live in the present according to what we believe about the future! In a Post here on November 13, I wrote: "The Baptist church, where I was baptized and later ordained to the Ministry, taught Dispensationalism [think "Left Behind" series and the Scofield Bible] and I defended that as my belief, in my Ordination Examination, before a Council of other Fundamentalist Baptist Clergy more than 45 years ago. But within a few years of that Exam, I became convinced from Scripture that Dispensationalism can not be defended, but Historic Premillennialism can be (It was the dominant view for the first 200 plus years of church history) and I have held to that for most of my years in the Ministry (I also see strengths in both a- and post-millennialism).

The position about the End Times (Eschatology) of the early Church from the 4th Century up to and including the Protestant Reformers and the Classic Protestant Confessions of Faith (16th and 17th Centuries) is Amillennialism. "Reformed amillennialism teaches [us]... to expect increased lawlessness in the world, apostasy from the truth in the churches, the establishment of the Kingdom of Antichrist over the entire world and great tribulation for all [the Elect]. To such a world, fully developed in sin, will Christ return."- D.J Engelsma Disagreeing with that view and its lengthy History must not be done lightly. The majority view in the 18th and first half of the 19th Century was Postmillennialism. During that period in America, there was great progress of both world-wide Christianity and Western Civilization; hence, the impetus to believe the promised Millennium was in progress. After the Civil War and until the 1970's, Dispensationalism became popular with many, as current events seemed to belie any Golden Age. Today, there is a common agnosticism on this entire subject; but, in the last 5 years or so, as I have revisited this topic of Eschatology, I have made some revisions of my position. As with Historic Premillennialism, I believe the Kingdom is the dynamic reign of Christ over all. It began officially with His Ascension (actually, during his 3 year ministry). It involves cosmic conflict with Satan, whom Christ defeated and "chained" (Rev 20:2) during his ministry and the Easter Event. But Satan is still actively rebelling against Christ through his agents: Totalitarian Government (anti-Christ), False Religion (False Prophet) and Hedonistic Culture (Babylon). Caught in this conflict is the Church. The Kingdom is not the Church. The Kingdom is much more extensive- being Christ's work and dominion everywhere; but the Kingdom on earth is meant to be realized in the Church. The Church (not Israel) is the Covenant People of God and must seek to live according to the Norms of the Torah. Particularly, the Church has 3-fold Commission to Care for Earth, Love God & Neighbors (the Torah explains how to do all of that) and Make Disciples (proclaiming Christ and His Kingdom and bringing believers into the life and work of the Church). She is to be a faithful, obedient and true witness by doing all of this in the midst of hostile society. In these ways she is Christ's Agent in the Cosmic Conflict ("The Church Militant") This is not Premillennialism, but similar to Postmillennialism. The entire World will not be converted or experience a Golden Age of Peace and Prosperity. There will be increasing Apostasy and Lawlessness. Satan and his agents will grow increasingly stronger. Tribulation of the Church (and martyrdom) will increase. This is not the usual Postmillennialism, but it is the same as Amillennialism. Ultimately (in the future), Christ will come for His suffering Church. Saints who have died are already reigning with Christ above ("Church Triumphant"), in what is called the "intermediate state". When He appears, they shall be with Him. Rev. 20:4 I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years. The Second Coming will begin with Christ's public Appearance and the simultaneous Rapture of the Saints alive on earth and the Resurrection of the Saints who have died. They will join the saints now reigning with Christ whom He will bring with Him on that day. Then, all the Saints (the Church) will be together with Christ. (Note that the prophecy in 2 Thessalonians and in Revelation 21-22 do not say Christ actually touches down on this earth of ours.) This is Amillennialism. 1 Thess 4:13 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. 14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage each

other with these words. Immediately, (not 7 or 1000 years later) will follow the Day of Judgment (Armageddon, et al), in which Evil is utterly vanquished for ever. Then comes the New Heavens and New Earth for Eternity, in which will be Peace and Well-being for all the Saints. Since I no longer believe there will be a literal Millennium, I am no longer a Premillennialist. Additional Thoughts about Details When Christ returns, will He actually engage in battle with a literal Antichrist and False Prophet? They are not literal persons, but Systems. (Our warfare is not against flesh and blood, but spiritual powers.) Nevertheless, these systems apparently become embodied in actual persons, who could be destroyed or overthrown, as Hitler and Stalin were. That would mean that there would someday be a universal totalitarian government and a world-wide Religion, each with its titular head. Since we believe there will be a literal, visible Second Coming of Christ, we should have no problem believing there will be a literal Armageddon, with actual armies marshaled by the Anti-Christ and False Prophet. If the Second Coming and Armageddon are literal, we should have no problem believing the Judgment and Hell are also literal. We can not spiritualize them away. 2 Thessalonians 2:1 Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, 2 not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. 3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for (that day will not come) until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. 4 He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. (See Rev.13) 6 And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. 7 For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. Isaiah 11:4 He will strike the land with discipline from His mouth, and He will kill the wicked with a command from His lips. Rev 20:7 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. 9 They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. Rev.19:11 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. 13 He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. 14 The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. 19 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. 20 And the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. 21 The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse Rev 20:10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. As to Babylon, it is destroyed by failure of the international economic system that supports her. It collapses and brings down materialistic, degenerate culture dependant upon it. (Rev 17-18) Far from History ending in a Golden Age, it ends in terrible destruction and suffering. However, that is followed by a New Heavens and Earth, wherein dwell righteousness. 2 Peter 3:3 First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4 They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised?" 5 But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. 7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. Advent: Preparing for the Second Coming 11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, ... He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 19:40

Tuesday, November 13, 2007

DISPENSATIONALIST DEFUSED BY DEFINITIONS

Back in April, well-known, national evangelical Leader and Pastor, John MacArthur, preached a message at a Conference of Pastors, entitled "Why Every Self-Respecting Calvinist is a Pre-Millennialist." I have just caught up with the flap it created. Again, it is all about definitions and the flap would have been avoided if words (terms) used had been clarified. First, Pastor MacArthur does not mean "Pre-Millennialist". He means "Dispensationalist" (or, if you prefer, Pre-millennial Dispensationalist. Historic Pre-Millennialism (as in the works of George Ladd) is not the same as Dispensationalism. The latter misappropriates the former label, so much so, that many assume they are the same thing. They are not. The Baptist church, where I was baptized and later ordained to the Ministry, taught Dispensationalism and I defended it as my belief, in my Ordination Examination, before a Council of other Fundamental Baptist Clergy. Within a few years, I became convinced from Scripture that Dispensationalism can not be defended, but Historic Pre Millennialism can be and I have taught the latter System for most of my years in the Ministry- as a "self-respecting Calvinist". (I also see strengths in both a- and post-millennialism)

Dr. MacArthur is free to be a Dispensationalist, if he wants to. No problem. He also considers himself to be a Calvinist. This is a problem. To me a Calvinist believes in Covenant Theology. Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism are very different, contradictory, systems of Theology. A man can not be both. However, there are those who hold to Calvinist soteriology (T.U.L.I.P.) but not to Covenantalism, the Regulative Principle or any other distinctives of Reformed Theology and practice (including Infant Baptism and a high view of Communion) By their definition, they are Calvinists - a different definition than mine (and many others) This is the one that Dr. MacArthur holds. The linchpin of Dispensationalism is its Doctrine of Two Peoples of God. This is the key to understanding (all versions) of Dispensationalism. God has a spiritual People- the Church and an earthly People- the Nation Israel. There are different covenants and promises to each. In this short post, I will skip to the bottom line: I am convinced that God has one People- the Church. The covenant and promises apply to Her and are fulfilled in Her. The Church is most definitely not a "parenthesis", nor a replacement of Israel. She is the direct, organic continuation of Israel. I am interested in the modern, secular Nation of Israel in the same way as I am interested in Poland or South Africa. Dispensationalists are passionate supporters (the best friends) of Israel because they believe it is God's Chosen People. To me, that is not so. The Church is the Chosen of God. Actually, Christ is the Chosen One, the Elect, and all who come to saving faith in Jesus (including Jews) are the Chosen, the Elect of God in Him. I am convinced Scripture teaches this. The Church is composed of Believers who were Jews or Gentiles. In Christ (the Messiah), they are neither. They are One Body, a New Creation, the Israel of God, the seed of Abraham- God's People. You can see that different principles of interpretation of Scripture are operational here. That is how equally sincere Believers come to opposite conclusions about what the Bible teaches- about Israel or any other subject. When Christians say they believe in the authority of Scripture, that is good, but incomplete (almost dishonest, certainly misleading). They actually believe in the authority of Scripture as interpreted by their particular principles of interpretation- their grid through which they understand the meaning of Scripture (and they should state what that is in their affirmations of faith!) Dispensationalists argue they interpret the Scripture literally. So do the Calvinists who believe in Covenant Theology. We believe in metaphors literally as metaphors, likewise with symbolic and poetic language- all literally as what ever kind of literary genre they may be. Obviously, they define "literally" differently and that is because they read Scripture through different glasses, i.e.- they come to the Book with different presuppositions. (I believe that the Doctrine about the Two Peoples of God is a presupposition not derived from Scripture but read into it.) Those who believe in the Two Peoples of God scheme versus those who believe in the One People of God scheme will interpret particular texts accordingly and thus differently. Pastor MacArthur makes a major case out of this, insisting that only those who hold the Two Peoples Doctrine (like he does) can interpret Scripture properly. Miss that, he says, and you miss what the Bible is saying about a lot of other things, too! Mr. MacArthur's statement that every Calvinist must be a Dispensationalist is literally nonsense (-ical). He is saying every Calvinist (meaning, every believer in T.U.L.I.P.) who is a Premillennialist (meaning, interprets Scripture in the way a Dispensationalist interprets Scripture) must be a Dispensationalist. This is a tautology: every Premillennialist (Dispensationalist) is a Premillennialist (Dispensationalist). The major argument Pastor MacArthur used in his speech, insisting that Calvinists must be Dispensationalists, is that Calvinists believe in Election. His argument is: the Nation Israel was the Elect. God's Election is eternal (irrevocable). Since Calvinists believe in Election, they must believe that Israel is still and always will be the Elect. However, who is "Israel"? The modern secular nation of Israel? Ethnic Jews everywhere, in Israel or not? Believers (Jews and Gentiles) in the Promised Messiah (Christ), i.e.- the Church? If the latter is true (as I believe and most historic Calvinists believe) then the Church in the Old Testament (the True Israel) was the Elect. God's Election is eternal (irrevocable). Since Calvinists believe in Election, they must believe that the Church was, is and always will be the Elect. Simple. I can agree with the words of Mr. MacArthur's argument, while realizing we both mean something very different by them.

Definitions!!<http://www.challies.com/archives/shepherds-confe/why-every-selfr.php> <http://faithbyhearing.wordpress.com/>

2007/03/15/macarthur-why-every-self-respecting-calvinist-should-be-a-premillennialist/

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 09:37

Thursday, November 1, 2007

WHERE ARE THE DEPARTED SAINTS?

Isaiah 65:17-25 Nov. 1 is All Saints Day, in which we honor those Believers who have "passed away". Where are they? We shall not be disembodied spirits (ghosts)! We believe in the resurrection of the body. Christ has a glorified body and ours will be like his. Where does He live now? Where shall we live when we are with Him in our glorified bodies, after we leave this world in which we now live? [Back in the 8th Century, God promised-] I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; "Create" is the same Hebrew word used in Genesis 1, bara, for the creation of the present heavens and earth. God promises an altogether new environment in which we will live- a glorified "world" for people with glorified bodies the former things [the heavens and earth as we know them] shall not be remembered or come to mind.

That could be a sad, maybe terrible thought, for those with good experiences and enjoyable, special places here But be glad [God says] and rejoice for ever in what I am creating [the new heavens and earth] Why is God doing this? for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; God is creating a new, perfect environment for His new People. They are the Saints we are remembering today, the Church, the Redeemed. The "new heavens and earth" being created are for them. These People will be a source of joy to God. He will delight in them. (This is the main reason why I interpret this prophecy as a metaphor, using images familiar to Isaiah's audience. It is not about Israel, the Nation. It is about the New Covenant People. The second reason is that there are no Gentiles or unbelievers in this new world. We have here a picture of "Heaven" waiting for the Elect) no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed. This is the same prophecy, the same Picture, recorded for Believers in the letters of Paul and the Revelation of John. They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord and their descendants as well. Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord. (cf Isaiah 2 and 11) The Vision describes 7 Benefits for the Citizens of the New World coming: 1. No sorrow or pain 2. Long life span 3. Private property enjoyed in perpetuity 4. Productive labor 5. Happy family life 6. God's true and immediate presence experienced 7. Shalom (peace, well-being, security) for all This is not utopian babble nor is it a secular Plan to be realized by social engineering or Government decree or legislation. It is a thoroughly religious Vision. The heart of it is God's Holy Mountain (The Temple) and Christ as King, seated on the Throne in its midst. It is a description of the "Messianic Kingdom". This Kingdom is not altogether future, waiting on the Second Coming. This Kingdom began on earth with the 3 year earthly ministry of Jesus in Israel. It really took off with his ascension to the Throne in heaven from whence He now reigns. It has been "coming" ever since and can be found on earth wherever we see these "Benefits" becoming a reality among the People of God. We are justified in pursuing them as Christians. The Lord Himself taught us to pray: "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth". Looking beyond the literal meaning of these words, we can get excited about the characteristics of Heaven which can be expected, at least in part, now on earth: Healthy lives [resurrection bodies are perfect and live forever] Sufficient provision of all our needs [in heaven we shall lack nothing] Happy family life [all our relationships will be perfect] God's true and immediate presence experienced Shalom (peace, well-being, security) The principles laid out in the Torah, that we are to live by here and now, show us the way to all of these blessings However, there shall always be conflict and struggle with evil powers and sin in this present world. The fulfillment of the Vision, the full realization of these promises blessings awaits the Parousia of the King when we, like the departed Saints, shall enter the new heavens and the new earth prepared for us. Come Lord Jesus!

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 18:17

A NEW DAY IS COMING

2 Peter 3:8-13 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to

live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 18:10

Wednesday, October 10, 2007

JUDGMENT OF THE NATIONS

1. God is the Highest Authority- The Kingdom, Power and Glory is His alone! He is Sovereign over all.2. Kings [all governors] are to rule for God, as His representative and minister. This is true, even of pagan Rulers.3. All people who hold authority are subject to God, particularly, to the Law of God, whether they acknowledge Him or not.4. If the Rulers [civil governments] do not "keep the Law", eventually God's negative Judgment will come upon the Nation.5. Does all of this about ancient Israel apply to other nations, including ours today? YES

The pagan rulers mentioned in the Old Testament did not know the Mosaic Law. However, they were still held accountable to God for their actions according to the most basic moral principles of that Law. See the stories of Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and the king of Tyre. The Apostle Paul tells us that God was just in His judgment of these pagan rulers, because what may be known about God is plain to them' Rom.1:19 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that [Rulers] are without excuse. 32...they know God's righteous decree... Rom 2:14 Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law...15 ... show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them. All peoples have "written on their hearts" a basic sense of moral "oughtness". Yes, they have a "fallen nature" and they are "dead in sin"; but, they are still human beings and this inner witness of conscience is still present, as are all the other qualities of human beings, such as rationality and creativity. As Rom 2:15 says, people may have great inner conflict over what is right and wrong and a sense of moral guilt, even though they are "hard-hearted"; but they still have an inner witness that some acts are morally horrific, while others are noble. It requires Special Revelation via the Scripture to know the Gospel; nevertheless this "Natural Law" exists and it is the basis God has for holding pagan Nations accountable for their actions. For example, study the first chapter of Amos which records God's judgment coming on those pagan Nations guilty of violence, oppression, cruelty in their treatment of other Nations and people groups (e.g.- slave trading). Natural Law, particularly, Natural Moral Law, is about Justice. That is God's yardstick for every Nation. Instead of politicking and legislating to make this a Christian Country, our goal should be to make it a Country wherein there is Justice (as measured by God's standards) for all.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:25

Saturday, September 15, 2007

JESUS THE WARRIOR

Jesus the Nazarene carpenter is all in vogue now. Being a Christian is following his example as a servant of the marginalized, That is the popular image of Jesus for many: the suffering servant who loved others. That Jesus died (to atone for others). He is no more. That Jesus was vindicated by God and raised to His right Hand. That Carpenter was resurrected (transformed) and now sits on a Throne with all God's power and authority having been given to him. He now is a King who reigns, but He has enemies and they must be conquered. (All of this is clearly portrayed in the Book of Revelation and I explain the relevant passages here on my Website <http://www.calvinfox.com/web/revelation.html>) The Jesus we believe in and serve is a Warrior King, such as David was. Psalm 18, that I used devotionally for Friday's QT Thots, describes This Warrior and He says of God-

He trains my hands for battle and my arms for bending even a bow of bronze. You have given me (Jesus) your shield of victory; your right hand also sustains me; your loving care makes me great. You lengthen my stride beneath me, and my ankles do not give way. I pursue my enemies and overtake them; I will not turn back till I have destroyed them. I strike them down and they cannot rise; they fall defeated at my feet. You have girded me with strength for the battle; you have cast down my adversaries beneath me; you have put my enemies to flight. You deliver me from the strife of the peoples; you put me at the head of the nations. A people I have not known shall serve me; no sooner shall they hear than they shall obey me; strangers will cringe before me. The foreign peoples will lose heart; they shall come trembling out of their strongholds. The Lord lives! Blessèd is my rock! Exalted is the God of my salvation! He is the God who gave me victory and cast down the peoples beneath me. These words apply to Christ. See Psalm 2 et al You rescued me from the fury of my enemies; you exalted me above those who rose against me; you saved me (Jesus) from my deadly foe; see Col.2:15, et al. Therefore will I extol you among the nations, O Lord, and sing praises to your name. He multiplies the victories of his king; he shows loving-kindness to his anointed, to David and his descendants for ever. In Romans 15:9, Paul teaches the words of v.49 refer to Christ. Followers of Christ are called to be warriors like Jesus. We are part of His Army, fighting to advance His reign everywhere. Onward, Christian Soldiers! For the King!

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 00:26

Thursday, September 6, 2007

WHEN CONVERSION IS NOT CONVERSION

An IVCF staffer wrote in her current prayer letter about all the New England staffers' "covenant to pray and to work together toward seeing more conversions on campus; conversions along the whole spectrum from skeptics to seekers to followers to leaders to world-changers." This is an interesting use of the word "Conversion". I understand what she means and the progression (the "whole spectrum") is a desirable one; but, with due respect for her good work, I have a problem with her use of the word. It is not what the Bible means by "Conversion" and it is more desirable that we use Bible words as the Bible uses them. Here are comments on the subject from a respected Dictionary-"Although the term "conversion" is common in theological and religious discussion today, it was a relatively rare term in the Bible. In its current popular usage it refers to someone who has come to Christ or become a Christian. The biblical roots of the concept involve the use of two terms that mean 'to turn' (Heb. sub; Gk. apostrophe)"...

"In sum, conversion is a turning to embrace God. So on a few key occasions the concepts of repentance and turning appear together in Acts (3:19; 26:20). Repentance reflects the attitude one brings into conversion, while turning pictures the change of orientation and direction that comes as a part of it (9:35 ? turned to the Lord; 11:21 ? alongside a reference to belief; 14:15 ? turn from worthless things; 15:19 ? turn to God; 26:18 ? turn from darkness to light). This is often Luke's way of describing what Paul refers to as faith, although Paul can speak of "turning to God from idols" as well (1 Thess 1:9-10). First Peter 2:25 uses the picture of coming to the great shepherd to express this idea. As one can see, the term can describe what one has turned from or can indicate to whom one turns."from Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology by Darrell L. Bock I have heard other Christians misuse this word also in much the same way as the IV staffer does. Left leaning "Evangelicals" use conversion to mean the turning of Believers into Social Activists. It's core Biblical meaning is sinners turning from idolatry and sin to God. It is a salvation word. To say that there are several conversions and that they are progressive from skepticism to seeking to following to leading to world-changing is saying something very different than what the Bible means by the word. In fact, the specific Bible meaning gets lost in this new usage. Turning from sin to God is the flip side of Repentance. They are inseparable. The sinner hears the Gospel about the person and work of God in Christ. The Holy Spirit convinces the sinner (who is more than a skeptic and not a seeker) that what s/he has heard is true. This leads to a change of mind (repentance) about the person and work of God in Christ. The sinner is gifted with faith (intellectual assent) toward the person and work of God in Christ. The Holy Spirit works the miracle of regeneration in the sinners heart. This sets the sinner's will free from its bondage to Sin and thus s/he is enabled to turn (convert) from idolatry and sinful living to God in Christ as Lord and Savior. Intellectual assent has deepened into trust and commitment. This repentance and conversion is a once in a life time experience. Biblical Conversion is not the continuum of seeking to following to leading to world-changing. Is "seeking" a substitute for hearing the Gospel, repentance, faith and Biblical conversion? If seeking includes these steps, why not say so? What does "following" mean? Discipleship? To say that following (discipleship) comes after seeking seems to overlook or eliminate hearing the Gospel, repentance, faith and Biblical conversion. It is a serious and common mistake to encourag or expect sinners to follow Christ without ever experiencing regeneration. To say that "leading" is next in the sequences implies that "following" ceases. If "following" means being a disciple who follows, i.e.-obeys and imitates Jesus, why should that cease? Perhaps what the Staffer is after here is a progression from new member of IV into leadership in the chapter. Certainly, a Leader should remain a disciple (if that is what follower meant). Finally, the IV Leader, still a follower-disciple, is hopefully going to graduate and go on to be a world-changer [What that means is even another issue to debate] You see how things get a little confusing here because of the original error of using a Bible word in a non-Biblical way. Biblically, conversion or coming to Christ involves entering a position of union with Christ by faith alone and adoption as a "son" of God. This makes possible the pardon of sins and a standing in grace. This is justification. Justification is the granting of forgiveness of sins and the imputation of righteousness by God to the sinner. It is a once and forever event and not a continuum. (For me it was September 5, 1955) Out of justification, because of justification, comes sanctification or progressive growth in holiness and righteousness. Finally, there will be glorification. Altogether, this is salvation. We can say, Biblically, we who are in Christ have been saved, are being saved and shall be saved. I have been believing and preaching this Doctrine for almost 50 years. The word "Conversion" as it is used today, such as by the IV staffer, does not convey any of this Doctrine. That is tragic.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:56

Friday, August 10, 2007

THE MAIN REASON TO DO SCIENTIFIC STUDY

Psalm 19 The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows his handiwork. One day tells its tale to another, and one night imparts knowledge to another. Although they have no words or language, and their voices are not heard, ... Their sound has gone out into all lands, and their message [about the Glory of God and His works] to the ends of the world. The heavens (the universe with planets and stars, et al) and all of Creation (see Acts 14:17, Romans 1:19-20) have a testimony. They tell everyone every where, every day and night, about God. They are God's Revelation of Himself- His other Book [Nature is known as General Revelation. The Bible is Special Revelation. The two go together and must never be separated. The latter is essential to interpret the former.] Therefore, how important the Creation is! It must be appreciated and cared for because it reveals and glorifies God. This is not the same as being "Green" and "saving the planet" because we humans need it for our survival, nor is this the same as worshipping Nature, as though it were itself divine. How important is Creation's testimony. The natural world must be (observed and studied) to learn it. This is the purpose and motive for all of the Sciences. When we study Mathematics, we are discovering the Mind and attributes of God. Whether we use microscope or telescope, we are discovering the handiwork of God. This is not the same as using Science in order to control or exploit Nature for human purposes. Of course, when Creation is appreciated and cared for, observed and studied, for its Testimony to God, a major consequent will be the survival and betterment of Humankind. As always, when we seek God first, all else necessary will follow.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 19:03

Wednesday, April 18, 2007

PREPARING FOR DEATH AND DYING IN LIGHT OF THE VT TRAGEDY

"Death" is a reality- for everyone. I never cease to be amazed that most people seem surprised by it, certainly unprepared for it. First, we all live for the same amount of time, which is forever. It is only the time spent on earth that differs for each of us. The focus in the Bible is on where we will spend our time, after we leave terra firma. We are on solid ground in dealing with Death only when we get that straight. Those who know they are going to Heaven do not grieve in the same manner as those who do not have that assurance. It is settled for us. The very moment this earthly life is over, whether from illness or a madman's bullet or a drunken driver's car, we know we are present with the One who died and is now alive forevermore in Heaven. That is a far better place. We have not been cheated. We will be more fully alive then, than now. This is the case for all the Christian Virginia Tech students and staff that were murdered this week.

2 Corinthians 5:1 Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. 5 Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. 6 Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. 7 We live by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 4:13 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. 17 ...we will be with the Lord forever. 18. Therefore encourage each other with these words. 1 Corinthians 15:50 I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, ... 51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: ...we will all be changed— 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. 54... , then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." 55 "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. It was this assurance of Eternal Life that enabled King David to accept the death of a son and move on with his own life. 2 Samuel 12:23 [King David had fasted and prayed that his sick infant son would live] But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me." Second, having said all of this, there remains, for most of us, a real sting caused by the reality of dying, that the assurance of Eternal Life in Heaven simply does not assuage. Death and dying are connected, but are different and must be faced separately. Many of us have come to terms with Death, it is the dying we have a hard time with. (Some dying is peaceful and welcomed by all) The word "bereavement" means to be robbed- to have something precious ripped away from us. "Sorry for your loss" is now a common, customary cliché. But "loss" is exactly what we are suffering when a loved one passes on. The greater the loss, the greater the pain. They will be fine, but will we? Having someone we know and care about die can be extremely painful for the most committed Christian or person of faith, especially if the loss was forced upon us by violence or cruelty or "human error". Death itself is inevitable for all of us, but death under such circumstances is not. That pains us and we need grace to handle it, above and beyond the assurance of eternal life for our loved one or friend. Consider how David handled the loss of his adult son Absalom, killed in war 2 Samuel 18:33 The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!" 19:1 Joab was told, "The king is weeping and mourning for Absalom." 2 And for the whole army the victory that day was turned into mourning, because on that day the troops heard it said, "The king is grieving for his son." 4 The king covered his face and cried aloud, "O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!" And consider how the Apostle Paul felt about his companion, Epaphroditus, a Believer, who was very sick-Philippians 2:27 Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow [i.e.- if he had died] Third, comfort in loss, especially under tragic circumstances, comes from another Doctrine. Usually, I say the Sovereignty of God; but perhaps its corollary is more helpful- the Providence of God. We are not fatalists ("whatever will be, will be") and we do not agree that "everything has a purpose", meaning nothing is without reason and good come out of everything. That is not really much comfort in many cases, even if it often seems true. We definitely do not believe "time heals all things". Time does nothing. What is missing from each of these platitudes or bromides is God [that is what makes them false]. The Doctrine of Providence means the living, loving, all-knowing, all mighty and holy God is directly, personally, purposely, intentionally involved in our lives and "stuff that happens". He is more than sovereign, He is provident. That word literally means He looks ahead [pro-video] and knows what is coming. He does not obliterate Evil [yet] or deny people their choices or take away their responsibilities. That truth is very important. We must acknowledge that. Often in our pain, we do not. Provident also means, seeing what is coming, God provides, i.e.- He sees to it that we will have the help and necessities we need. 1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation [better: trial] has seized you except what is common to man [certainly that includes tragedy, suffering, pain] And God is faithful; [How is He faithful? He can be depended upon to] not let [as Sovereign, all-powerful, He is in control] let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.

[which means He knows what we are enduring and exactly how much we can handle, before we are truly overcome and broken] But when you are tempted, [It happens. God does allow terrible trials to happen. Trust Him on this. He has His own reasons. Faith means we do not have to know what they are and we are out of line to demand that he explain Himself to us. Rom 9:20 But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'] Faith says, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Praise be the name of the Lord." Romans 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! 34 "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor? 35 "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" 36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen. 1 Corinthians 10:13 continues- He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. That is what we can depend on a provident God to do: provide for our deepest needs in our trials, in our loss, our pain. What He provides will enable us to stand up under our trial; in this case, our bereavement and sorrow. Our world has taken a serious blow and it will be very different; but the blow will not destroy us, if we accept and use the help the Lord provides. This verse does not say what that help shall be. It is personal and different for each of us because we are different. But the provision of the Lord in our distress will suite us exactly. Count on it. When slings and arrows assail us, the Lord is our Rock and Refuge- a very present help in our need! Look to Him for it. I pray everyone involved and touched by the Virginia Tech tragedy will!

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:42

Wednesday, March 14, 2007

ARE HOMOSEXUALS SEXUALLY IMMORAL? Revised

Is homosexual copulation immoral? Are homosexuals immoral people? The answer depends on the definition of the words used to define "immoral". American Heritage Dictionary re. "immorality" - "Contrary to established moral principles" What are established moral principles (for the majority of Christians) when it comes to sexual acts? Answer: moral sexual acts are those which happen between a man and a woman who are married to each other [although Christians disagree as to which specific acts are included: all agree on vaginal coitus (unless forced or harmful- husbands have been known to rape their wives), but all do not agree about anal or oral coitus]. By this definition, coitus before marriage would be an immoral act (fornication) as well as coitus which is extramarital (adultery). The heterosexual characters in many TV shows and movies are guilty of committing sexual acts which are immoral by the established moral principles of most Christians. By these definitions, all homosexual acts are immoral, also; but, the latter are not any more immoral than the former by this definition. Are heterosexual people who commit immoral sex acts sexually immoral people? Yes, if they are constantly committing them ("Players" who "sleep around", always "hooking up", are known for frequent recreational sexual encounters, promiscuous). Are homosexual people sexually immoral people? Yes, if they have the same sexually immoral behavior as heterosexual people. A singular immoral sexual act, in itself, does not make the actor a sexually immoral person. Consider this extended definition- WordNet® 2.1, © 2005 Princeton University re. "immorality"- 1. deliberately violating accepted principles of right and wrong 2. not adhering to ethical or moral principles; 3. morally unprincipled; "immoral behavior" 4. characterized by wickedness or immorality; "led a very bad life" 5. marked by immorality; deviating from what is considered right or proper or good; People who are characterized as greedy, liars, thieves, slanderers, drunkards, abusive or violent, et al, are regularly violating Christian moral principles and therefore, are immoral, even if they are sexually chaste.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 19:10

PUTTING HOMOSEXUALITY INTO PERSPECTIVE Revised

The topic of homosexuality needs to be put into proper perspective by discussing it as part of the subject of sexuality and sexuality needs to be understood in the context of what is "natural", i.e.- by what God intended it for at Creation. This subject is not about the mechanics of coitus or about personal physical pleasure. It is also not about the "icky" factor (what people find personally repulsive or disgusting). When God created human beings, He created sexuality. He created some humans to be males and others to be females. He created all humans to be His image on earth, with the Mandate to go forth, have sex, produce children, fill the earth and have dominion over it- cultivating and caring for it (Genesis 1:28, 2:15) The reason humans were created male and female (the reason for sexual intercourse) was to enable them to fulfill this Mandate. Simple as that. This is the prime purpose for coitus. Obviously, males and females are made for this purpose. The creational, natural function of their sexual organs is to facilitate reproduction. Homosexual intercourse does not. Perhaps this entire discussion would change, if, instead of saying homosexual acts are "immoral" we say they are "unnatural". That, actually, is why they are immoral, not because they are same-sex unions. Unnatural does not mean "icky". Unnatural means unintended by nature, i.e.- by God. When the Apostle Paul condemns homosexual acts, he does so because such acts are "contrary to nature" (Romans 1:26). God's plan at Creation is what Paul has in mind as "natural". This brings the real issue to the fore and moves this topic beyond ceaseless debate about sexual morality. Obviously, the crucial matter is authority of Scripture, particularly the teaching of Genesis 1-2. For a generation that rejects that authority, there is no solution to this matter though discussion. The Gay Rights movement is growing in strength and will not give up until same sex unions are as acceptable and honored as are heterosexual unions. That may be an empty victory. The acceptance of gay sex as normal is gaining among those for whom heterosexual, immoral sex is also normal. This is the youth and young adults segment of the population. I realize there are related subjects that need discussion. Is reproduction the only natural use of sexuality? Has it no other function in the relationship of married people? What about impotence or infertility or other physical problems that make pregnancy unsafe or impossible? What of single or celibate adults, including the elderly? What purpose does sexuality have in their lives or in the lives of those married heterosexual couples beyond child bearing age? Is all sexual activity, other than reproduction, unnatural or immoral? Good questions, to be answered another time. One clue is found in the Bible book called the Song of Solomon. That Scripture celebrates erotic sexuality between a man and woman who are committed to each other, as an expression of their love for one another

Blog Export: DUTCH TREAT- Cal Fox's Blog, <http://www.calvinfox.com/blog/>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 19:07

Wednesday, March 7, 2007

WHAT USE IS THE MOSAIC LAW TODAY?

Greg Baus <http://honest2blog.blogspot.com/> has asked me this question: "how about this view of the law?" and he referred to an essay by Lee Iron found here: <http://honest2blog.blogspot.com/2007/02/sin-shall-have-no-dominion-how-does.html> The Iron essay was entered in a post entitled, "How does the Christian grow in genuine maturity? Better yet: how is Christ maturing His church?" I like and agree with the main thrust of Lee Iron's piece, "Married to Another". It is a well written essay. It has a good and necessary message. As with much of what I write, it needs a real world reality check when it comes to application. I appreciate his call for us to respect and use the Mosaic Law to guide us in living our Christian lives. I agree that the classic "three-fold division of the Law is wrongheaded," and that ... "large swaths of the Mosaic Law reflect the moral will of God founded on God's righteous nature and man's identity as the image of God is valid"

I also agree "Mosaic Law does contain ethical principles grounded in creation as seen in the covenant of works with Adam. This creation ethic is not relaxed or negated in the Law of Christ but transformed and fulfilled in the new creation (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10)." I agree on the importance of recognizing the on-going authority of what he calls the moral will of God. That is needed in this day of permissive antinomianism among Evangelicals. "The New Testament reaches back into the Old Testament to draw out ethical implications from the Mosaic Law, interpreted in light of its fulfillment in Christ. This provides a hermeneutical model for us to follow. We should study the Mosaic Law, not as if it were directly binding on us, but as those who have the mind of Christ we should weigh, test, and approve what is that good and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 5:10; Phil. 1:9-10)." However, I have problems when he concludes that we Christians are married to the Law of Christ and then summarizes that Law as [basically] the Law of Love, to be interpreted primarily by the Sermon on the Mount. Iron continues, "The substance of the righteousness demanded in the Mosaic Law finds expression in new covenant form in the Law of Christ. The moral will of God continues to be authoritatively binding on the New Covenant church, because it has reached its definitive exposition and fulfillment in Christ, that is, in the Law of Christ. (Gal. 6:2; 1 Cor. 9:21), "the perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25), and "the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:2).""So where do we go to learn the content of the Law of Christ? It is objectively revealed in the New Testament. It includes all of the ethical teaching of Jesus (e.g., the Sermon on the Mount; the new commandment, etc.) and of the apostles..." In practice, this effectively removes the authority of the Mosaic Law, especially among Christians who are strongly biased against that Law to begin with and those who insist they want to be New Testament Christians only. And there remains the critical matter of how we interpret all of the ethical teaching of Jesus. I know Left-leaning "evangelicals" who are excited about the so-called "Jesus Creed" [basically, the only thing that matters is Love of God and Neighbor] and those want to simply be "Red Letter" Christians [referring to those Bibles who print the words of Jesus in red] To them, the ethical teaching of Jesus eg- Luke 4, demands so-called radical actions for social, political and economic justice. They read their agenda back into passages such as Leviticus 25 and find there, for example, a Biblical imperative for international debt cancellation. The gathering of Manna in the Wilderness becomes the model for economic redistribution of goods by the State so all will have "enough", etc. There are Biblical Principles in the Torah that have universal social, political and economic application and I start there. Most people starting with the Sermon on the Mount, et al, will not find them there. These include the Cultural Mandate and the Creation ordinances and norms that are the foundation for the concept of Sphere Sovereignty. All of these define the Law of Christ and what it means to love our neighbors, e.g.- respect their marital and parental rights or their rights to own property and to privacy or to due process in the courts. Without those Norms, the Law of Christ or Love is a nose of putty to be shaped by the latest cultural values, eg- support for "Gay Marriage" or reverse racial discrimination [affirmative action] or abortion on demand. The Law of Christ, apart from the Torah, has been interpreted by some to require pacifism, the Welfare State and Socialism, et al. "In response to the charge of subjectivism, I have appealed in good Calvinistic fashion to both the Word and the Spirit. They must be kept together. Walking in the Spirit is not something that can occur apart from the prayerful study of God's revealed Word ..." This appeal to guidance by the "Word and Spirit" as an ideal sounds good, as an ideal. In practice, it is used by mainline denominations to justify, among other things, their policies of inclusion and diversity. I hear advocates of "Gay Marriage" argue that the Gospel demands it and Gay Rights are mandated by Biblical Justice. The Spirit tells them so. An appeal to be led by the Word and Spirit absolutely does not guarantee that we will be. Something far more objective is needed. That would be the Law. Psalm 119:65-88 O Lord, ... Teach me discernment and knowledge, for I have believed in your commandments. ... instruct me in your statutes. I will keep your commandments... my delight is in your law... I trust in your word. I know, O Lord, that your judgments are right. It is important to see that I speak of the Torah, the 5 Books of Moses, considered as a unit The Mosaic law, revealed at Sinai, is a subset of that and the Decalogue is a subset of that. Of course, hermeneutics are crucial. The interpretive principles I use are discussed in several place on my website. http://www.calvinfox.com/web/biblical_law.html Pauline

Theology has always been my forte, the Book Of Romans my favorite. That changed when I rediscovered Genesis. My evangelistic messages always began with the focus on the problem of sin. I often used the so-called Roman Road. If I referred to Genesis, it was to chapter 3 and the Fall. (Genesis 1 and 2 were for arguing about Origins) The Law (meaning the moral law, not the ceremonial or civil) condemned us. We had to repent from the works of the Law (often expanded to include modern terms like Baptism and church membership) as a means to salvation. We are saved by grace alone apart for such works (interpreted as all attempts to earn or deserve salvation) I know the drill. I also know I am justified. I have assurance that God has saved me, is saving me and He shall save me- all by Grace and for His glory alone. That is settled. When I talk about the Torah and the Law, I am not going back under the curse of the Law or some Covenant of Works. I am past those topics and have no interest in fighting over that territory. I am in very different territory now. In fact, my hope is for my Calvinist friends to think outside the traditional Confession box. As Bro. Iron has argued in his controversy with his former OPC peers, the Scripture comes before the Confessions. The latter are considered good and faithful summaries of Scripture Truth, but they are man-made and historically influenced documents and are always subject to the corrective of Scripture. I personally am not bound by them. I am bound by the Scripture. What you are reading is not an academic, exegetical paper, but a mere overview and summary of what I believe Scripture teaches. I can supply footnotes. Genesis was written for the comfort and encouragement of the Covenant People of God on their pilgrimage to the promised land. That is still its wider context. What it teaches can only be understood and properly applied within that Covenant relationship. Genesis and the Torah are all about how God wants His Creation to be and His People to live their everyday lives as part of it. My evangelism now begins with Creation and the fact that all God made, including human beings, are essentially good. They still are. The Fall and its curse are a fact of history. The antithesis between Humanity and God is real. Creation has been misdirected. Redemption is God's Plan to redeem His Creation. I am a neo-calvinist. The original questions for which Mr Baus was seeking answers in the paper by Mr Iron were simple: "How does the Christian grow in genuine maturity? Better yet: how is Christ maturing His church?" The implication is the answers are connected with the use of the Law. Usually, Christian maturity is understood in terms of the image of Christ and the relevant texts are addressed to the Church, plural, rather than individuals Eph 4: 11 [ESV] And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. The evidence of a mature church, i.e. as measured by likeness to Christ (13), is unity of all in the faith and knowledge of Christ (v.13) not tossed about by false doctrine (14) According to this passage, Christ makes the church grow into maturity (15). The means that Christ uses to achieve this maturity are 1. the varied ministries of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers (11-12)- these are all preachers and ministers of the Word cf.- the work of the Apostles building up the Church in Acts 2. each member ministering to each other, i.e.- loving the other 1 Cor 14: 26 What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. ...29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. 30 If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. 31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, Ephesians 5:18 ...be filled with the Spirit, 19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, Hebrews 10:24 ...consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 ... encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Sanctification is progressive growth in holiness. Holiness is cleansing and separation from sin and dedication to the service of God and righteousness. Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit within the Believer. The means He uses includes Scripture. 2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. Certainly, the Holy Spirit uses the New Testament to sanctify the Believer, assuming that the text is studied and inwardly digested with the intent to not only hear, but obey it. However, the Scripture in this text is what we call the Old Testament, including the Torah and Mosaic Law. Knowing the law is a major means by which the Believer becomes equipped and trained in right living. The Spirit uses the Law to reprove and correct in personal righteousness. That is sanctification. One way Christ matures His Church, to answer Greg Baus' original question, is through the Law. From personal experience, the lessons come when we try to obey it. We grow in grace most when we seek to live faithfully out in the world. We are not talking about falling back into "works" for salvation. The Law, the Torah, teaches us God's Norms for daily living. I want to know, as a Christian, what God expects of me in the way I use my time, talent and treasure- not how to get saved- how to conduct my life. More than that, I want to know how we Christians, how the Church, is to conduct itself in the public square, as citizens. The Law can show me. This is not about the Covenant of Works or of Redemption or Grace. This is not about Salvation. Listen to John Calvin on this use of the Law- J. Calvin's Institutes- Chap 7"12. The third use of the Law (being also the principal use, and more closely connected with its proper end) has respect to believers in whose hearts the Spirit of God already flourishes and reigns. ... there are two ways in which they still profit in the Law. For it is the best instrument for enabling them daily to learn with greater truth and certainty what that will of the Lord is which they aspire to follow, and to confirm them in this

knowledge; ...Let none of us deem ourselves exempt from this necessity, for none have as yet attained to such a degree of wisdom, as that they may not, by the daily instruction of the Law, advance to a purer knowledge of the Divine will. Then, because we need not doctrine merely, but exhortation also, the servant of God will derive this further advantage from the Law: by frequently meditating upon it, he will be excited to obedience, and confirmed in it, and so drawn away from the slippery paths of sin. ...Even in the case of a spiritual man, inasmuch as he is still burdened with the weight of the flesh, the Law is a constant stimulus, pricking him forward when he would indulge in sloth. David had this use in view when he pronounced this high eulogium on the Law, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes," (Ps. 19:7, Again, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path," (Ps. 119:105) The whole psalm abounds in passages to the same effect.. ... Such passages are not inconsistent with those of Paul, ...The object of the Psalmist is to celebrate the advantages which the Lord, by means of his law, bestows on those whom he inwardly inspires with a love of obedience."Thank you for your questions, Greg. I hope my attempt to answer has been helpful- Cal

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 22:13

Friday, March 2, 2007

NO BONES ABOUT IT!

If you are at all concerned about the so-called discovery of the evidence that Jesus and his alleged wife and their child were buried, here is a good rebuttal and challenge to us. [Dr White's site, by the way, is a good resource for many things] With the growing emphasis by many on the person of Jesus, the Man and his example and teachings [the red letters], it would probably not make much of a difference if Cameron's Hoax were true. But, the bedrock of the Christian Faith is not the so-called red letter teaching of Jesus, but his resurrection, following his sacrificial death. That is the core of the Gospel, not the command to love others, which even secularists, atheists and non-Christians agree is commendable. [A letter to the editor published in our daily paper, just this morning, damned President Bush as a terrible Christian because, as everyone knows, he said, the very definition of a Christian is a person who forgives his enemies, whereas Mr Bush is killing them in Iraq! Go figure...] <http://www.serioustimes.com/blog.asp?id=25>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 13:02

Thursday, March 1, 2007

INDIVIDUALISM AND SPHERE SOVEREIGNTY

Many of the Psalms record intense personal (spiritual, social, physical) struggles of the Believer. They reveal a very personal relationship with God- an individual relationship. The 16th Century Protestant Reformation was a major source of today's strong belief in the "Individual", especially, in the individual's right to freedom of conscience and choice. However, basic aspects of today's Western, American understanding of the "Individual" are not Scriptural or Reformed. Biblically, every individual person is created in the image of God and therefore, has infinite worth. Each individual has faculties for spirituality, reasoning, creativity and morality. All these characteristics are what make each individual a human being, a living soul. There is one other faculty: communality. Although the individual has infinite worth, God (his creator) declared it is not good for the individual to be alone. We are each created with the ability and the need to live with others, in covenant (committed) community. The Creator (in His Law) directs us to what these communities are to be. First, men and women are meant to live together as husband and wife, i.e.- in the Community of Marriage. These individuals are, in fact, to become and live as "one flesh". Next, married individuals are to be fruitful- have children, and live together as families. When the sons marry, he and his wife begin another family; but these family units live as one extended, inter-generational Community. Next, these extended families assemble and live together as a Community of Faith (Israel, then the Church: the Covenant people of God) The solitary, autonomous, self-determined "individual" is not in this picture. He was never intended by God to exist; nor are these social units, known to neocalvinists as "Spheres", intended to be an aggregate of individuals, who voluntarily associate in ways and times in order to meet their individual needs and separate when they do not. These Spheres are committed communities. Individuals can not become and fulfill what God created and gifted and called each of them to be when they live alone. We find our individuality, our life, when we lose it for the sake of the Spheres: Marriage, Family, extended natural Family and Church. Each of them has God-given or "creational" norms or boundaries. Each Sphere has its own inner working or system, with members fulfilling various functions or roles. Each Sphere has a God-given or creational purpose, which the members work together to fulfill. Each Sphere has its own authority (known as "sovereignty" to neocalvinists) and while they cooperate, they must not usurp or interfere with each other, i.e.- they must respect each other's sovereignty. The Church must respect the extended Family, the extended family must respect the "primary" family and it must respect the Marriage at the heart of it all. None of the Spheres is absolute nor autonomous from each other or God. The primary function of each Sphere, of all Spheres, is to act as God's agent in the world, obeying God's mandate to fill the earth, care for it and continue His work of cultivating it for the common good of all who inhabit it. To this end of fulfilling the "Cultural Mandate", other Spheres will naturally arise- voluntary social associations of individuals, for work and the production and distribution of goods and services. Even more voluntary associations will naturally arise for Education, Communications, the Arts and Recreation. None of these Spheres, extensions of the original Marriage, Family and Church Spheres, are autonomous either, but cooperate with each other and function according to the Law of God, accountable to Him. There is one more Sphere: Civil Government. It is not to usurp or interfere with any of these other Spheres. It is not to fulfill the purposes assigned by God to Marriages, Families or the Church or any of the extended Associations. Its function is to see to it that "everyone plays by the rules" (God's rules). It is to facilitate cooperation, and work out disagreements, between all the Spheres. It is to pass and enforce legislation and laws to that end. Because all the individuals involved in the Spheres are sinners, there will be injustice- transgression of God's Law and oppression. Civil Government is to stop such injustice, wherever it may occur in any of the Spheres. They are systems and may very well malfunction or fail. One of the functions of the Church is to remind the Civil Government of its proper responsibilities and that it, too, is not autonomous or absolute. It, too, is a servant of God and must serve under His Law. The "individual" becomes "all he was meant to be" within the commitment of Marriage, Family, Church, Social Associations and the Civil Government. The individual is free within the confines of a covenant relationship, with all of the other individuals, in these Spheres. All of the above is a simple sketch of a very important concept. It is, granted, an Ideal. Obviously, the real world does not function this way. Nevertheless, it is a Biblical Ideal and one Christians should get serious about. I find it revolutionary. The challenge we have as Christians is to work to redeem the real world situation, working as change agents to redirect the train that has gotten on the wrong track. That means working to change the reasons it did that.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:19

Friday, February 23, 2007

MIRACLES

What is a "miracle"? The word is used often to describe something wonderful that seems to the observer to have no known or rational explanation, like hummingbirds flying or the rivers that flow backward or else something that happened that seemed to have been impossible or, certainly, against all odds, e.g.- underdog sports teams beating the superstar favorites or hikers being found alive after being lost in a blizzard or a 9½ once premie becoming a normal, healthy child or someone walking away from a train wreck or house fire that was fatal to others. In Scripture, "miracle" is a special work of God, apparently done part from, or even in defiance of, known "natural laws". Biblically, something called a miracle is usually (but not always) done immediately, i.e.- directly, without any instrument or human involvement. God speaks or wills something and it "just happens". However, miracles do not just happen without a purpose. Miracles are works of God (signs) to bring glory to Him and to advance or fulfill his greater purposes. The healing miracles in the Gospels were not primarily for the purpose of helping sick or dying people. They were done primarily to validate the claims of Jesus to be the Messiah. The healing miracles done by God in the ministry of the Apostles were done primarily to validate the truth of the Gospel they were preaching (to people for whom such a display of the supernatural would be convincing). Conversely, miracles not happening can also serve God's purposes. In all cases, they are His work, to do or not to do, as He deems best for His own glory.

Nowhere in the New Testament is there a command for all Christians to go about trying to work miracles, let alone healing people. God may or may not use a Christian as an instrument, now and then, here and there, to work a miracle. That is not the same as God expecting all Christians to have a ministry of miraculous Healing (God has certainly called people to healing ministries in the Medical and Health professions). Christians should not feel guilty or deficient in some way, because they do not work miracles. But we should have our minds open to the possibility that God might seek His glory in a special way by producing a Biblical Miracle in our presence or circumstances. And certainly we can see the hand of God in those other occasions that are popularly called "miracles". At the very least, there are lessons to be learned in them and maybe that is what God was doing in them- trying to teach us something that will grab our attention and save our lives- or our souls.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:33

Tuesday, February 6, 2007

WOMEN OF ACTS- For A Women's Bible Study

MARY, mother of Jesus Acts 1:14 They all met together continually for prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus. MARY, mother of Mark, and RHODA Acts 12:11 Peter finally realized what had happened. "It's really true!" he said to himself. "The Lord has sent his angel and saved me from Herod and from what the Jews were hoping to do to me!" 12 After a little thought, he went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered for prayer. 13 He knocked at the door in the gate, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to open it. 14 When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the door, she ran back inside and told everyone, "Peter is standing at the door!" 15 "You're out of your mind," they said. When she insisted, they decided, "It must be his angel." 16 Meanwhile, Peter continued knocking. SAPPHIRA Acts 4:32 All the believers were of one heart and mind, and they felt that what they owned was not their own; they shared everything they had. 34 There was no poverty among them, because people who owned land or houses sold them 35 and brought the money to the apostles to give to others in need. 36 For instance, there was Joseph... 37 He sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles for those in need. 5:1 There was also a man named Ananias who, with his wife, Sapphira, sold some property. 2 He brought part of the money to the apostles, but he claimed it was the full amount. His wife had agreed to this deception. 3 Then Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself. 4 The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren't lying to us but to God." 5 As soon as Ananias heard these words, he fell to the floor and died. Everyone who heard about it was terrified. 6 Then some young men wrapped him in a sheet and took him out and buried him. 7 About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 Peter asked her, "Was this the price you and your husband received for your land?" "Yes," she replied, "that was the price." 9 And Peter said, "How could the two of you even think of doing a thing like this--conspiring together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Just outside that door are the young men who buried your husband, and they will carry you out, too." 10 Instantly, she fell to the floor and died. When the young men came in and saw that she was dead, they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. 11 Great fear gripped the entire church and all others who heard what had happened.

TABITHA Acts 9:36 There was a believer [disciple] in Joppa named Tabitha (which in Greek is Dorcas). She was always doing kind things for others and helping the poor. 37 About this time she became ill and died. Her friends prepared her for burial and laid her in an upstairs room. 38 But they had heard that Peter was nearby at Lydda, so they sent two men to beg him, "Please come as soon as possible!" 39 So Peter returned with them; and as soon as he arrived, they took him to the upstairs room. The room was filled with widows who were weeping and showing him the coats and other garments Dorcas had made for them. 40 But Peter asked them all to leave the room; then he knelt and prayed. Turning to the body he said, "Get up, Tabitha." And she opened her eyes! When she saw Peter, she sat up! 41 He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then he called in the widows and all the believers, and he showed them that she was alive. 42 The news raced through the whole town, and many believed in the Lord. 43 And Peter stayed a long time in Joppa, living with Simon, a leatherworker. LYDIA Acts 16:11 We boarded a boat at Troas and sailed straight across to the island of Samothrace, and the next day we landed at Neapolis. 12 From there we reached Philippi, a major city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony; we stayed there several days. 13 On the Sabbath we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where we supposed that some people met for prayer, and we sat down to speak with some women who had come together. 14 One of them was Lydia from Thyatira, a merchant of expensive purple cloth. [Lydia was a prominent business woman. -cf 17:4] She was a worshiper of God. [Gentile convert to Judaism] As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying. 15 She was baptized along with other members of her household [servants?], and she asked us to be her guests. "If you agree that I am faithful to the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my home." And she urged us until we did. 17:4 Some who listened were persuaded and became converts, including a large number of ... many important women of the city. [Later at Thessalonica-] 12 As a result, many Jews believed, as did some of the prominent Greek women Acts 16 [later, having been in prison] 40 Paul and Silas returned to the home of Lydia, where they met with the believers [a new church in Lydia's home] and encouraged them once more before leaving town. Philippians 1:1 This letter is from Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus. It is written to all of God's people in Philippi, who believe in Christ Jesus, and to the elders and deacons. 2 May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace. 3 Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. 4 I always pray for you, and I make my requests with a heart full of joy 5 because you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. PRISCILLA Acts 18:1 Then Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. 2 There he became acquainted with a Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently arrived from Italy with his wife, Priscilla. They had been expelled from Italy as a result of Claudius Caesar's order to deport all Jews from Rome. 3 Paul lived and worked with them, for they were tentmakers just as he was. 4 Each Sabbath found Paul at the synagogue, trying to convince the Jews and Greeks alike. 5 Paul spent his full time preaching and testifying to the

Jews, telling them, "The Messiah you are looking for is Jesus." 18 Paul stayed in Corinth for some time after that and then said good-bye to the brothers and sisters and sailed for the coast of Syria, taking Priscilla and Aquila with him....19 When they arrived at the port of Ephesus, Paul left the others behind. 24 Meanwhile, a Jew named Apollos, an eloquent speaker who knew the Scriptures well, had just arrived in Ephesus from Alexandria in Egypt. 25 He had been taught the way of the Lord and talked to others with great enthusiasm and accuracy about Jesus. However, he knew only about John's baptism. 26 When Priscilla and Aquila heard him preaching boldly in the synagogue, they took him aside and explained the way of God more accurately1. Discuss each woman- Read each passage and put yourself into the story2. Which woman do you identify with? How? Explain why3. What does that identification tell you about "how you are" in your various relationships (discuss)

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 19:06

Sunday, February 4, 2007

NEW ARTICLE ON MY WEBSITE

Today, we added a new Article to my website. It has 3 parts and explores the subject of Authority. It argues that there is Authority, and subordination to it, built into the world God has made. Marriage, Family, Church and Community all require the submission to God-given authority and the subordination of the roles of otherwise equal persons. Far from being a Model for egalitarianism, the Trinity is a Model for complementarianism.

<http://www.calvinfox.com/web/authority.html> Later this week, look for another 3-part Article on Human Rights. Other Articles published on the website are Epistemology (what can we know, how do we know it?), Basic Logic, Introductions to the Philosophy of Mathematics and the Philosophy of Science, Basic Biblical Principles of Civil Government, Highlights of the Book of Revelation, Biblical Law, Idolatry, Biblical Principles of Economics and an Introduction to Book of Genesis. <http://www.calvinfox.com/web/articles.html>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 18:43

Friday, February 2, 2007

WHAT IS THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH?

Among many evangelicals today, who are seeking to move beyond their doctrinal roots (post-evangelicals) and are "emerging" into a so-called "radical" kind of Christian, the emphasis, in their faith and value system, is upon Jesus as role model for suffering servant hood, the Man with compassion for the poor and marginalized or the Man who was a radical political Revolutionary. This is the Model for the Church of our time. This is what Jesus was all about and we are to follow his way. I beg to differ. This is a misreading of Jesus- a misrepresentation of what his life and, especially, his death were about. I have said this over and over. I'll try again. The following is from my post of April 4 2006 Here is a brief overview of what Jesus himself said was the purpose of his life and death. What the Apostles added later is derived from Jesus' own teaching. Key to these sayings, is the consciousness Jesus had that he was the prophesied Messiah. At the beginning of his public work on earth, he heard the voice of God announcing from heaven: "Thou art my Son", a Messianic declaration from Psalm 2:7 and "my Beloved, in whom I am well pleased" another reference to the Messiah from Isaiah 42:1ff This was, significantly, at Jesus' Baptism, in which he identified with sinners, and is followed by his Temptation in the Wilderness. There Jesus wrestles with who he is and makes his decision to fulfill the work of the Messiah. The day comes when the disciples of Jesus recognize and confess that he is, indeed, the Messiah (Matt 16, 17) Immediately after that illumination, and in light of it, Jesus begins to teach his disciples the meaning of his coming death (Matthew 16:21, Mark 8:32, Luke 9:22). Three times he addresses this matter with the disciples (Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:32f with parallels in Matthew and Luke) . This was the major theme of their last months together. Indeed, most of what we call the Gospels are devoted to the last week of the life of Jesus. They are not biographies. His suffering, death and resurrection receive far more attention than anything else in the narratives (which is why they are called "Gospels") whereas many Christians today give far more attention to the works or teachings of Jesus prior to the last week. On each of these three occasions, Jesus says he "must" suffer and die. This means his death was inevitable. Activists have agreed, saying, of course, Jesus' death was inevitable because he was challenging the political and religious establishment. He was radical in his behavior and teaching. Thus, he courted death and inevitably ("must") finally be killed by his enemies. However, "must" also means indispensable, necessary, required or planned. Jesus was following a plan [predetermined with his Father in eternity]. His death was a goal in itself that must be achieved. His death was his calling and purpose. This conclusion is understood best when we remember that Jesus knew he was the prophesied Messiah. In his predictions about his suffering and death, Jesus called himself the "Son of Man" (Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:32f), a title for the Messiah. Jesus especially identified himself with the Suffering Servant described by Isaiah (Luke 22:37 with Isaiah 53:12) The role of the Suffering Servant was to die and that, for a specific purpose. Jesus teaches his disciples exactly what the purpose of his life and death was- Mark 10:32 And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, 33 saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. 34 And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise." 42 Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 43 But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." The Son of Man, Jesus, came to earth, in order to give his life as a ransom for many. This was his vocation. He did not come primarily to feed the poor or care for the sick and dying. His Luke 4 sermon did, indeed, announce what he would do during his earthly ministry. It was not why he came from heaven to earth. He did not come to inaugurate the Old Testament "Jubilee" or some plan for the distribution of wealth. Jesus was born to die. He was born to die as a ransom. He was born to die as a ransom for many. We are all to be servants of others. Jesus death as a ransom for others was the service he came to render. Our service may well include clothing the naked or sheltering the homeless. His service was his death. Earlier, Jesus had said- Mark 8:35 whoever would save his life will lose [kill, destroy or abolish] it, but whoever loses [kills, destroys or abolishes] his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. 36 what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit [damage or lose] his life? 37 For what can a man give in return [in exchange] for his life [if it has been damaged or lost? Nothing!- implied] Now Jesus says, he will give his life as a "ransom" for others. The implication is that the life of Jesus would work as an exchange for those lives that had been damaged or lost. This would be his "service". This concept may be found in texts like this- Psalm 49: (NASB) 7 No man can by any means redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him-- 8 For the redemption of his soul is costly, And he should cease trying forever-- The Greek word translated "ransom" [lutron] "consistently denotes the payment of a ransom price, substitutionary in character" "The word is always used to denote equivalent." Morris, p.29f Their is no concern about to whom a ransom was paid, but on the freedom gained by it for whomever was captive. The word "for" in the phrase "ransom for many" is also very important. The most common meaning of the preposition [anti] is "instead

of", "in place of". It implies substitution. The ransom Jesus would give to secure freedom was his life, offered as a substitute for the captive. Isaiah 53:10 ...the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, He will bear their iniquities. 12 ...He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors. This text says more than the one in Mark 8, but there are important similarities and the Prophet is talking about the Suffering Servant with whom Jesus identified. Our last key text wherein Jesus explains the meaning of his death contains his words during the Last Supper-Matt 26:27 (NASV) And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; 28 for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. He died for [peri = on account of, because of, concerning] many [sinners] for [eis = unto, in order to] the forgiveness of their sins. Jesus said his coming death would provide the blood that would seal the New Covenant God was to offer His Elect People. It would include the forgiveness of their sins. Jeremiah 31:31 (NASV) "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ...for they will all know Me,..." declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." All of this makes clear, in his own words, why Jesus came from Heaven to earth- why he was born as one of us. It explains the purpose of his life and death. He was born to die, shedding his blood for the forgiveness of our sins, ransoming us from condemnation. For further study, I recommend The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross, Leon Morris and The Death of Christ by James Denney. The above was the earlier post. Let me add here, the central act of Christian Worship is the Lord's Supper. It celebrates, not Jesus' ministry to the poor, but his body broken and his blood shed for the forgiveness of sins. When we take Communion, we are proclaiming the death of Jesus, not his life. The issue of what Jesus was born to do is often raised today in the discussion about what the Church is to do. Why was it born? It is not to fulfill Jesus' declaration in Luke 4 about the Messianic prophecy he was fulfilling. It is to go into the world and preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins in his name [by his death and resurrection] to all nations. (Luke, chapter 24, verse 47) Jesus commissions us to witness to his death and resurrection (v.48) Later, Luke writes the command of Jesus to the church to bear this witness to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:8) That is why the Church was born.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:34

Saturday, January 6, 2007

AN ENJOYABLE AND WORTHWHILE THEOLOGICAL READ

This afternoon, I have enjoyed reading these articles about, and by, renowned Bible Scholar, N.T. Wright. If you like very serious Biblical exposition, written in an engaging and very accessible manner, full of practical application with a twist of controversy that will make you think, I recommend these articles and others found on the Wright website. You won't go wrong.
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/january/22.38.html>
http://www.ntwrightpage.com/Wright_New_Perspectives.htm
http://www.trinity-pres.net/essays/bombing-theologians_Wright-review.pdf

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 16:01

Tuesday, December 5, 2006

THE PREGNANT WOMAN AND THE RED DRAGON

Chapter 12 of the Book of Revelation, is not a Vision of the Future, the End Times. It is a Vision of what happened in the Past and is happening now in the Present. We must grasp a very basic, important truth: what we read about in the daily news and in history books is not what it seems. We are witnessing in real time the cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan being acted out in the time-space world in which we live. Everything in Chapter 12 is symbolic of that Conflict 1 And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. 2 She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. Jesus was a Jew. His Heritage was the Faith, Tradition and History of Israel. In a very real sense, Israel was his mother. She is the pregnant woman in this passage. 5 She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron Jesus was born to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies of the coming Messiah, Savior of Israel, who would govern all Nations.

3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon... 4 ... And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. From the beginning of time, Satan hated Jesus. His purpose was to destroy him, preventing him from becoming Ruler of the world. He sought repeatedly to interrupt his royal lineage and prevent his birth, throughout Old Testament history. Failing that, Satan sought to have the infant Ruler to be killed. Failing that, too, Satan sought to derail and ruin Jesus' earthly ministry and again worked to have him murdered. For his part, the miracles and exorcisms of Jesus were his attacks against Satan. These two characters were locked in fatal combat. The entire Gospel narrative must be seen in this wider context. Satan engineered the trial that led to Jesus murder, but God had something else in mind. Jesus was not destroyed by the crucifixion. 5..., but [instead, the woman's] child was caught up to God and to his throne By his death and resurrection, Jesus defeated Satan; but, his enemy was not finished with him. Being defeated enraged Satan and he turns his hatred of Jesus against his followers, the Church. This explains much of the trouble and suffering that the Church has experienced throughout the last 2000 years. Paul speaks of this when he writes that our struggle is not really with people. It is with evil spiritual powers that manipulate those people. (Eph 6:12) The Cosmic Conflict continues on earth-7 Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, 8 but he was defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world--he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. Jesus, the woman's baby and now the Risen Christ, has become Ruler of the Nations. As He said, after His resurrection, all authority in Heaven and earth had been given by the Father to Him. We do not simply try to be like Jesus as he was when he walked beside the Sea of Galilee. We now have to do with the exalted Sovereign Lord. We worship and serve the King of all kings. 10 I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come But the authority of the Sovereign is contested and Satan is determined to prevent His rule over the nations and to cause havoc on earth among men 12 "... woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!" 13 ...when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth... 17 [he] became furious ... and went off to make war ... on those who ... hold to the testimony of Jesus. Thus, this advice from the Apostle Peter to the persecuted Church of his day- 5:8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. 10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. 11 To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. <http://www.calvinfox.com/web/revelation.html>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 07:39

Wednesday, November 15, 2006

WHO IS BELSHAZZAR TODAY?

Daniel 5O king, [Belshazzer] the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar kingship, greatness, glory, and majesty. And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he acted proudly, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and his glory was stripped from him. He was driven from human society, ... His dwelling was with the wild asses, ...until he learned that the Most High God has sovereignty over the kingdom of mortals, and sets over it whomsoever he will. And you, Belshazzar his son, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this! You have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven! You have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know; but the God in whose power is your very breath, and to whom belong all your ways, you have not honoured. 'So..., God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; you have been weighed on the scales and found wanting;

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 09:09

Wednesday, November 8, 2006

LEARN TO THINK BIBLICALLY ABOUT GOVERNMENT

We begin with an insult. Our Governor- elect, in his meeting this morning with the press, trumpeted that the people of Massachusetts have spoken. They have voted for change. Well, I guess I am not part of the people of Massachusetts. I did not vote for a change. So what he said is not true of me- or of the 44% of voters who did not chose him. That is the insult. Democrats now occupy almost all state-wide political offices. We have one Party rule. This charming, soft and well spoken, charismatic Politician, who oozes self-confidence, is a strong advocate of women's so-called right to abortion, of embryonic stem-cell research and of so-called "Gay Marriage". He is a liberal Democrat on fiscal policy as well, but, is vague as to what he proposes for the Economy. He just keeps repeating, "Together we can". Some friends of ours are simply glad that the Republicans are out because the latter have cut State aid and funding to a variety of Human Services programs. This, they believe, Democrat Patrick will rectify. Christians must learn to think Biblically about Government. An easy way to begin is by studying the Article I wrote on the subject posted on my Website<http://www.calvinfox.com/web/civilgov.html>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 13:19

Monday, October 30, 2006

CONTINUATION OF A MEDIATION IN 1 TIMOTHY 1

Why was Jesus born? The angel said, "Your shall call his name "Jesus", for he shall save people from their sins." The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the foremost. This self proclaimed foremost sinner was a well-educated, well-connected, religious Leader of his day. But for that very reason I received mercy, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display the utmost patience, making me an example to those who would come to believe in him for eternal life. Repeatedly, according to many I hear or read, it seems as though Jesus was born to save the "poor", homeless, marginalized people, often with mental illnesses and addictions. And, accordingly, the mission and ministry of Jesus was to feed, cloth, house and heal these folks. In fact, I hear repeatedly, this is the Gospel. Enough already! This is not the Gospel. This is not what the mission of Jesus was about. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners

Paul said he was the model, the example of what saving grace and conversion are all about. Paul was not "poor", homeless, marginalized or suffering from mental illnesses and addictions. He was a sinner. I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence. But I received mercy ...and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Sinners can be well-educated, affluent and powerful people like Paul, as well as "poor", homeless, marginalized or suffering from mental illnesses and addictions. Social, economic and political status is not what defines sin or sinners. The Gospel of Christ is for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their father or mother, for murderers, fornicators, sodomites, slave-traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God... That sound teaching, that conforms to the glorious Gospel of God, is the Law of God. It is the yardstick by which sinful actions are measured. It is the flashlight that reveals who sinners are. And by far, most of them are going to be typical, middle to upper class, educated and employed, consumer driven, materialistic people seeking to live the American Dream. And the point of conversion, for everyone, rich or poor, is to worship and serve the True and Triune God, however and where ever He designs for us to do that. And where ever we find people, rich and poor, who have hearts surrendered to this worship and service, we shall find people seeking to obey and practice the Law of God. Their greatest passion will be to spread the Gospel of Salvation from sin, i.e.- Evangelism and world-wide Missions, and teaching converts everywhere to obey all that God has commended in His Word-Law. To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 12:21

Saturday, October 21, 2006

CHRISTIANS: HEADING FOR JUDGMENT

2 Kings 17:1-23...the people of Israel sinned against the Lord their God, ...They had worshipped other gods and walked in the customs of the nations The people of Israel secretly did things that were not right against the Lord their God. ...They did wicked things, provoking the Lord to anger; they served idols, of which the Lord had said to them, 'You shall not do this.' Yet the Lord warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, 'Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the law that I commanded your ancestors and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets.' They would not listen but were stubborn, as their ancestors had been, who did not believe in the Lord their God. They despised his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their ancestors, and the warnings that he gave them. They went after false idols and became false; they followed the nations that were around them, concerning whom the Lord had commanded them that they should not do as they did. They rejected all the commandments of the Lord their God and made for themselves cast images ... and served Baal. They made their sons and their daughters pass through fire; they used divination and augury; and they sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger. Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight;

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 16:16

Saturday, September 30, 2006

THE VULGAR BIBLE

Today, the Church Calendar commemorates Jerome, b 347 (?)“Jerome is best known as the translator of the Bible into Latin. A previous version (now called the Old Latin) existed, but Jerome's version far surpassed it in scholarship and in literary quality. Jerome was well versed in classical Latin (as well as Greek and Hebrew), but deliberately translated the Bible into the style of Latin that was actually spoken and written by the majority of persons in his own time. This kind of Latin is known as Vulgate Latin (meaning the Latin of the common people), and accordingly Jerome's translation is called the Vulgate.”“Jerome was the foremost biblical scholar of the ancient Church. His translation of the Bible, along with his commentaries and homilies on the biblical books, have made him a major intellectual force in the Western Church.” <http://www.oremus.org/oremus.cgi?>An excellent resource for learning about the history of the English Bible and its many translations may be found at<http://www.bible-researcher.com/links02.html>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 10:25

Sunday, September 24, 2006

WHERE DO WE FIND THE REVELATION OF GOD?

God's self-revelation includes, but is more and other than, the Bible. Bible and God's revelation can not be used interchangeably, as though they were one and the same, because there is more revelation than the 66 canonical books. Allow me to explain. God makes known (reveals) His being, character, attributes and will in many ways. Another name for this Revelation is the Word, the expression of God, the means by which he makes Himself known and through which we know Him: the Word of God. We often consider the Bible as inscripturated (verbal, prepositional) revelation from God- the Word of God written. True, but actually, the New Testament most often uses the phrase "Word of God" to refer specifically to the Gospel (you can check that out in any concordance). Most often, it is the Gospel preached that is known as the Word of God (rather than the Gospel written) The "Word of God" is primarily the salvific message preached by the Apostles: the message about Salvation through the person and work of Christ.

This preached Message (the verbal Word of God) is recorded especially in the Book of Acts (the sermons found there) and explained and applied in the Epistles, especially of Paul. The stories of the life and (mostly, the) death of Jesus are called "gospels", but they are neither biographies nor the salvific Message [I am greatly simplifying here]. When all of this material was finally written down: the essential, preached Word of God (the salvific Gospel), the apostolic letters, the Book of Acts and the four so-called "gospels", we have the New Testament. That, combined with the written Old Testament (including the 5 Books of Moses and the books of Wisdom and of the Prophets) we ultimately have the 66 canonical (official) books of the Bible. The entire work is called the written Word of God: verbal, prepositional revelation-Scripture. But there is more revelation from God than that. The Scripture itself teaches us that God has also revealed Himself in many non-verbal ways. He "speaks" through Creation, ie- through both Nature and Natural Law, knowable through Reason, even by the unregenerate. Related to Natural Law is Moral Law, known through the conscience, also in every person. Further, the Scripture tells us God reveals Himself through his acts in History (and I do not think He stopped acting in history during the 1st century) The ultimate non-verbal revelation of God is the person of Jesus. Yes, the person: his life and works, which, in turn, reveal the character and some of the attributes of God. In addition to speaking the words of God, Jesus himself, incarnates God. (John 1:1) Thus, Jesus also is Revelation, the Word of God. The Image of God; (but, of course, we are dependent on the apostolic writers of the New Testament, primarily the writers of the gospels, for our knowledge of the life and work of Jesus. The Apostles and the basic salvific Gospel show comparatively little interest in the life of the historic Jesus. They focus on his death, resurrection and risen life now, as King.) All this revelation is properly called the Word of God, his non-verbal Word. Actually, it is known as General Revelation, while the verbal revelation is called Special Revelation. Both together are Word of God. Without in any way decreasing the authority of Scripture as God's verbal and inerrant Word, we need to tune in to all the specific ways in which God speaks and listen to Him there. A major reason why Christians do not agree with each other about many things is failure to do this. We tend to chose our favorite source of knowledge (Revelation) of God's attributes, character, purposes and will. Some chose General over Special, some the Law over the Gospel, some the "Gospels" or Life of Jesus over the rest of the New Testament, etc. Instead, we need to be open to all God has revealed and where ever that revelation may be found. Principles of Interpretation from other sources will guide us in pulling all of this together. It should also be noted that the Word does more than reveal God. The Word of God, verbal and non-verbal, is the dynamic, creative Agent by which God effects His will and purposes. This is a related and important topic, to be discussed at a later time.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 13:27

Saturday, September 16, 2006

BEWARE: WHAT WE SEE IS OFTEN WHAT WE GET

Acts 8:36 As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" 38 And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. Is this passage an example of baptism by immersion? It is used as a standard proof text to argue that immersion is the mode used in the Apostolic Church. The text does say the candidate (the eunuch) went down into the water and Philip baptized him and then he came up out of the water. Down into the water and up out of the water sure sounds like a description of immersion. Well, it sounds that way to a Baptist, but look more carefully- both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water...Both the candidate and the administrator went down into the water- both, together. And they both, together, came up out of the water. Does that reading prove they both were totally submerged (immersed) under the water and then both emerged from under the water? Both were baptized? That is proving more than Baptists want to prove. It is more plausible that both men went down (stepped) into the water (the river), but not under the water. Standing, say, knee deep in the water, Philip could then pour water over the Eunuch's head, baptizing him. Then both men came (walked) out of the river. That, I believe is what happened. While this text does not provide a case for baptism by immersion, the Baptist interpretation of this text proves that we must be careful about reading into a text what we already, on other grounds, believe. What we see before reading is often what we get when we read. What we bring to a text often is what determines what we get out of a text. We must all beware.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 13:46

Friday, August 18, 2006

WHICH BIBLE TRANSLATION

I use the English Standard Version for my main study Bible. Here is a site with a brief but good explanation of the principles employed by the compilers of the ESV and a recommendation for a full-length book on the subject. This site references some really good Christian scholars and some of the books they have written- all of them very solid and worthwhile. <http://www.gnpcb.org/product/1581347553>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:12

Saturday, June 10, 2006

NEW MATERIAL ON WEBSITE TODAY

I started adding new material to my website today: developing a Christian Epistemology (from previous Blog Posts) and a Christian Philosophy of Mathematics. The first Unit is about Logic. I hope you find it interesting and helpful. There is a lot more to come <http://www.calvinfox.com/Work> on the beta version of the website is on hold for another couple of weeks.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 19:06

Friday, May 26, 2006

"Spiritual Formation" ? Is it in the Bible?

Earlier this week, we began a study of the Spiritual Formation Movement, which is becoming very popular among many Evangelicals [see the post below] Is this a good thing? I see yellow flags. Certainly, becoming like Christ is good! How does the Bible define that concept? The key text every writer on Spiritual Formation uses is Romans 8:29. There we read we are, indeed, to be "conformed to the image of his Son". Good, but what is meant by "the image" in this text? The context is about glorification. Compare v.29 and v.30 Romans 8:29 those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son 8:30 those whom he predestined he also ... glorified. To be "conformed to Christ" in this text means to be raised from the dead as he was and have a glorified body like his. Philippians 3:20 our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body 1 Corinthians 15:49 Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. Philippians 3:10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that ... I may attain the resurrection from the dead. [and a glorified body like his. See the next verse-] Romans 8:16 The Spirit himself bears witness ... that we are ... fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. 18 I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. Romans 8:23 [we] groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. This brings us back to the context for Rom 8:29. "Becoming like Christ" is not growing in "deep intimacy with God and genuine compassion for all of creation" or "intimacy with God and growth in Christ-like character... to live as he would" "Becoming like Christ" in this text is something other than "a matter of developing patterns of lifelong fellowship. ... not doing things for God but of being with him. It is aligning ourselves with his will, listening to his voice, being beneficiaries of his grace.... to lose ourselves in the glory of God."

These definitions of Spiritual Formation, common in the new Movement, sound to me like what has been traditionally known as Mysticism- Denying the intrinsic difference between Creator and creature, Mysticism is an effort, through various "disciplines", to seek communion and, finally, union with God, in which the human becomes absorbed in the Divine. Such Mysticism is not Protestant [Reformed], let alone, Scriptural, spirituality. Thus, the yellow flag for the Spiritual Formation Movement. Becoming like Christ (in Paul's letters, particularly Rom 8:29) is something God does for us in the resurrection. It is not the result of any "spiritual disciplines" such as fasting or contemplative, non-verbal, content-less Meditation or walking through a labyrinth. Chapter 15 of John is the standard Scriptural support for defining the process of spiritual formation as seeking deep intimacy with God, placing ourselves in the loving arms of God, being with God and losing ourselves in Him, etc- all this happening periodically, through the use of certain spiritual exercises. Many believe that this is what Jesus meant by the phrase "Abide in me". (I remember being attracted to this teaching at one time in the writings of Andrew Murray and others who were part of the Keswick Movement, which started in England around 1875) John 15 is the classic passage about the Vine (Jesus) and the Branches (Believers). Abiding is absolutely essential to bearing fruit. The problem is that the word "abide" (Greek-meno) does not have the meaning read into it by today's advocates of Spiritual Formation. Meno is used 127 times. It means 'settle down and live in a place', 'dwell', 'remain', 'stay' or 'last'. That is all the word "abide" ever means. It does not mean the process or experience of spiritual formation as defined here. [I'll write more about that later] What is the Scriptural definition and process of "Becoming like Christ"? We must begin at the beginning. We learn in the Book of Genesis [see my Notes elsewhere], that we human beings are animals and have bodies and physical needs. However, unlike all other creatures, human beings are created in the image of God. This is what gives us our unique dignity and value. It means that we are like God and reflect our Creator. Being like God, we humans are "Persons". That means we have the capacity and need for rationality, creativity, morality and communality. Together, these attributes are known as "soul". No other animal is a Person or has a soul. We also, as human persons, have the need and capacity for communion with God. That makes us, like Him, spiritual beings. All that we are as Persons was negatively affected by "the Fall"- the Image has been fractured. Redemption in Christ involves the redemption of the Human (body and soul). In Christ, there is a new creation. The work of Christ is to restore the Image of God in us to what God intended (and more) before the Fall happened. The work of Christ is to redeem our rationality, creativity, morality and communality. It is to restore our spirituality- our communion with God. And it restores our bodies, as well (in this life and ultimately at the Resurrection). The phrase "Spiritual Formation" [like the word "Trinity"] is not found in the Scripture. The closest expression is found

here- Gal 4:19 my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! What does that mean? If there is any "Spiritual Formation", it involves formation of the fully Human. Jesus is the Image of God incarnate. To be like Jesus, is to be like (image) God. If Spiritual Formation involves becoming like Christ, it involves becoming fully Human. The audacious claim, and amazing promise of the Christian Faith, is this: To be fully Human requires becoming a mature Christian. Becoming a mature Christian results in becoming fully Human. The mark of a mature Christian (and thus, of being a fully human person) is Christ-like rationality, Christ-like creativity, Christ-like morality, Christ-like communality and Christ-like spirituality. If the Bible talks about "Spiritual Formation" it is achieving all this. Ephesians 4:11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 ... for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain ...to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, Colossians 1:28 Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ Christ-like rationality- having the mind of Christ, thinking "Christianly" (Scripturally) about all things Christ-like creativity- making and developing original works of beauty [in all fields] in harmony with the Creator of all good things Christ-like morality- living by the same Kingdom values and principles as he did Christ-like communality- living in relationships with others as he did Christ-like spirituality- praising God, waiting on Him (in prayer), trusting and obeying God the Father as he did (to the death if need be) This is what being a mature Christian is like. This is what it means to be fully Human. This is what it means to be "like Christ". This is what it means to have Christ "formed in you. (to be continued)

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 19:13

Monday, May 22, 2006

A-Pre- or Post- ?

A friend mentioned that he was starting to read my notes on the Book of Revelation. <http://www.freewebs.com/reformationinstitute/> I said my interpretation is not traditional, meaning Dispensational. He replied that is not the "traditional" view. My friend grew up Roman Catholic. I changed the word to "popular". If anyone has grown up in a fundamentalist Protestant church, the Dispensationalist interpretation of Revelation is both traditional and still popular. It is been around for more than 150 years in America. That means those Christians have known no other view for maybe 5 generations. That makes it "traditional" to them. Though less well-known today, it is still very influential, especially in shaping American politics and foreign policy. It provides the main ideological driving force behind American support for Israel. For maybe 200 years prior to the Civil War, the dominant view of the Second Coming of Christ was "Post-Millennial". After a great movement of the Holy Spirit and much successful evangelism and world missions, the Millennium, i.e. Christianity, will be established on earth. Then Christ will return. This view is on the ascendancy.

For approximately 1200 years prior to the settlement of the Colonies (5th -16th centuries), the Church was considered to be the Kingdom of God on earth. Eventually, as in the early Creeds, Christ would come again along with the Resurrection and Judgement of the "Quick and the Dead". There would be no other Millennium before or after the Second Coming, only Eternity. Hence this view is known as "amillennial". The earliest or "Classic" view (first three and half centuries) is also called Pre-Millennial, same as in Dispensationalism; but with significant differences- there would be no Rapture (the teaching of a secret, sudden Rapture of the Church was new in 1830). Christ's return would be after the Tribulation and then would come the 1000 year Millennial Kingdom on earth. Of course, proponents of all these views believe they have Scriptural support. The only one I am persuaded does not is Dispensationalism, although that was the position I was taught as a new Christian, 50 years ago. Any "Millennium" will be this side of the Lord's return, not after. See my notes on my website.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 12:31

Friday, May 19, 2006

Study in the Book of Revelation is done

I did not put a lot of new material on this Blog this week because I have been busy writing for my Website. Just now I finished posting there my notes for the Book of Revelation that are relevant to the earlier study about Government. I hope you will check them out. If the print is too small, just click on View in the task bar and increase the text size for your eyes. Thanks and God bless <http://freewebs.com/reformationinstitute/ProRegeCal>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 12:35

Monday, May 15, 2006

Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

This afternoon I added more material, covering Chapter 6, to my study of the Book of Revelation found on my website <http://freewebs.com/reformationinstitute/> Some have written to me, saying they have found this new study helpful. For that I am grateful. I also continue to appreciate the help of my son-in-law, Norm, as webmaster (trouble shooter) It is all Pro RegeCal

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 18:22

Friday, May 12, 2006

New Material on my Website: Book of Revelation

I have just added new materials on my website <http://freewebs.com/reformationinstitute/>The notes about Government are still there. I have selected material relevant to that subject from the Book of Revelation. There is an "Introduction", explaining my approach to the Book. I am not a "Left Behind" Dispensationalist. Also sections about the "Center of the Universe" and the Christian Philosophy of History. I earnestly hope you will visit the Site and give the material a chance. It is under construction and as time goes along I shall add much more.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:34

Wednesday, May 10, 2006

Thinking about a mother who had a lot of heartache

I've been thinking about Mary as a mother this week. She had been real excited as a pregnant young woman to know that God had a wonderful plan for the baby she was carrying. God being good, I'm sure she believed that the plan was good, too. From what the Angel had told her she expected her baby would grow up to be a great man of God, whom the Lord would use to save the world. How proud and happy she must have been about her son's bright future. He was going to be the Messiah- a King. The Angel from God had said she would be the most blessed woman on earth. How strange it must have been to hear the old man, Simeon, predict that her son's life would bring her great pain. How could that be? Then there was that whole thing of him running away when he was 13, causing his parents to become very worried about him. When found, the young teen tried to explain what he had done, but they did not understand him. What was that all about? Instead of going into the family business as expected, he becomes unemployed and homeless. Later Mary hears her son has become a street Preacher. People cheer him at first and then increasingly jeer him. After three years wondering around, her precious baby, her first born, becomes a wanted criminal and is arrested. His brothers and sisters try to tell Mary that he is not only homeless- he is mentally ill. The Angel had not said anything about any of this. What was going on here? Life was not turning out as she expected- as God had led her to believe it would be. How can this be happening? What about God's promises? She had trusted God to keep those promises about her baby. Had he betrayed her trust? She had sacrificed a lot to carry that baby as an unwed teen. She hadn't asked for that. This wasn't fair. All she did was obey what she believed God wanted of her. Was she wrong? Had she been naive and foolish? Had she misunderstood God? Why was being a mother so hard? Was this in God's Plan for her, too? Instead of becoming a King, she sees her beloved son falsely accused of crimes and condemned to death. She watches from afar as her son suffers, abandoned by his friends and the rest of his family. He hears him ask God, "Why?" and she mumbles the same question. Little did she realize then, that all of this was indeed in God's good plan for both mother and child. He had not abandoned either of them. Things are often not what they seem to be. She later came to believe all this grief was in God's permissive will, God was in control, it was all worthwhile. His work as Messiah did indeed require her son to suffer and be killed. But after all that, God vindicated him and placed him on the long promised Throne, from which He now rules the world. Finally, realizing all of this, the worry wrinkled and tear worn face of Mary reflected that she was indeed, the most blessed woman who ever lived. The simple faith she had as a young woman was not for nothing. Her tough experiences as a mother turned out to be all worthwhile.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 19:53

Tuesday, April 18. 2006

Heart of the Gospel or Medieval Gore?

My post on April 4 entitled "Why was Jesus born?" spelled out why Jesus was born, in his own words. He himself said he was born to shed his blood as a substitutionary atonement for sins. I wrote that short piece (and this one today) because I find some younger self-styled Evangelicals questioning or denying this classic evangelical Doctrine. This is very troubling. The major objections of some contemporary "Evangelicals" to the doctrine: The Incarnation is more important. The emphasis on the Cross is Medieval. It is a concept that makes no sense in today's Culture. Moderns can't relate to it. It is too individualistic or pietistic in today's concern with Community and Social Issues. It is far too violent and makes God out to be a sadistic child-killer. A long, solid exposition of this Doctrine by Mark Dever, answering these objections, appeared today on the Christianity Today website - <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/005/9.29.html> another in depth article on this subject by one of my all time favorite theologians, J.I. Packer, is at http://www.the-highway.com/cross_Packer.html

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 18:44

Why some Pastors believe Jesus body turned to dust

When we first moved to Amherst MA, some 35 years ago, we visited a local mainline church. I got into a sort of heated discussion with the Pastor at the door after the service. He had preached that the literal reurrection of Jesus's body never happened. Rather this Story conveyed God's Promise to revive his People and give them a new lease on life, when needed, in their pilgrimage here on earth. That was it. Jesus actual body turned to dust. It makes no difference what happened to it. Thirty five years later, that is still the mainline churches' interpretation of the Story. Why? Their view of Scripture. They are still committed to the closed time-space world of the philosophical Naturalist. The same view of most Scientists and Evolutionists. According to that view, there can not be such a thing as a literal bodily resurrection. There most definitely can not be any such thing as Divine intervention from without into History (i.e.- Miracles) That is why, therefore, the story of the resurrection is exactly that: a story, not actual or factual. It is a metaphoric story expressing the faith of that early church: a "Community of Faith" by definition. That same Community of Faith, through the years, has interpreted the Story as it meets their needs. The Bible is a human book, written by fallible people, mainliners say [we used to call these folks Modernists or Liberals]. Therefore, it is fallible. There is a lesson and warning here for Evangelicals who accept the Gospel, including the reurrection as literally true, but who also agree that the Bible is fallible in matters not pertaining to the Gospel (such as Creation by divine fiat) Where do we draw the line? Mainliners are simply being consistent. Everything in the Bible, including the Gospel, is subject to the fallibility of its fallible writers, including the Story of the Resurrection. That view of the Bible is why the Pastor I debated with 35 years ago repudiated the Gospel of the Resurrection of the Body- Jesus and ours. What view of the Bible did you leave home with today?

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 13:14

Monday, April 17, 2006

Happy Spring?

The lead editorial in the local paper today equated Happy Easter with Happy Spring! Some of the Clergy quoted, in stories about various Services yesterday, also assured the readers that the Message of Easter is Hope- hope for new life, new beginnings, Light overcoming Darkness in our world. Etc. Well, the metaphors work. Easter can serve as a symbol for all of that. But the actual Truth of what happened gets lost in such loose translation. (Same misrepresentation was evident last week in articles about the meaning of Passover: supposedly, that was all about oppressed people seeking freedom. The Exodus was a giant Freedom March, a demonstration for Civil Rights. Well, not really!) The Truths of the Easter Message are, among several- 1. The Miracle of a literal physical resurrection of a dead body 2. The historical proof that the Man Jesus was the Messiah, Savior of the world (Mohammed and Buddha are still in their graves) 3. The defeat of Satan and Death (and therefore, full Salvation from Sin) 4. The assurance that all people will be resurrected physically None of this gets mentioned, in fact all of it gets lost, in the Happy Spring and New Life Message. It also gets lost in the "Jesus Lives" Message. There is no connection: Jesus could be alive after his death without his physical resurrection. In fact, many Christians believe that about Jesus just as they believe it about their loved ones who have also died. That obfuscates the unique event that was "The First Easter". The Resurrection of the body of Jesus, is a completely unique event in History and is absolutely essential for the redemption of the World. In no way is it to be confused with the rebirth of dandelions on my lawn or the plastic Easter Bunny on my neighbor's lawn.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 12:38

Monday, April 10, 2006

The Bible and Aliens

Often verses from the Old Testament are used to teach compassion and support for aliens who enter the United States illegally. These are verses about foreigners residing in Israel. That begs the question: are these two groups of people equivalent? Do the verses that apply to the latter apply to the former? If the reader is convinced that these are, indeed, equivalent groups we must go on to explore what care and support for them involved. Health and Human Services, housing and public education were not provided by the civil government in the Old Testament. Actually, the Federal and State and Municipal governments, as we know them in America, did not exist. National borders, passports, legal residence, citizenship visas and work papers ["Documents"], as we know them, did not exist. I think we are dealing with very different set of circumstances here. The wonderful verses in the Bible about caring for our neighbors, whoever they are, apply to individuals, family, church and voluntary community action. They do not apply to government public policy. The Just Society of the Bible was nothing like today's Welfare Society. By all means, we individuals, family, church and voluntary community groups must treat individuals [Strangers and Foreigners] who live among us with respect, regardless of their ethnicity or "country of origin". Absolutely. They, in turn, also have responsibilities. That is another topic.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 12:13

Saturday, April 8, 2006

Gut wrenching, body twisting ...

Many find comfort in the Psalms. Numbers 8, 19, 23, 121 are favorites. But if you read them all and often, you become aware that the Psalmist(s), like other people of faith in the Bible, were very human and often very troubled, conflicted and even wretched. The good thing is that they turn to the Lord and look to him for help, healing and deliverance from their misery. These were not plastic saints. Psalm 88:1 am full of trouble; my life is at the brink of the grave. I have become like one who has no strength; Lost among the dead, ...who lie in the grave...in the depths of the Pit, in dark places and in the abyss. ... great waves overwhelm me. I am in prison and cannot get free. Ever since my youth, I have been wretched ...I have borne ... terrors with a troubled mind...terrors have destroyed me; They surround me all day long like a flood; they encompass me on every side...darkness is my only companion. Christians can feel this way. We all know we are sinners. It is important that we allow ourselves to be human. Among other things, we have bad days. Very bad days. Life is not a happy clappy chorus at all. Sometimes, it s.... But God never gives up on us. He patiently listens. He understands. He helps. He does, in fact, save. The book of Hebrews assures us that Jesus himself struggled, like any other human being- like us. (Heb.4:15;5:7-8;12:2-4) . The Gospels, too, portray him as very human. He got tired and hungry. He became exasperated and angry at times. He despaired. Today's Reading about the death of his friend, Lazarus, reveals his emotions and the emotional struggle he was capable of-John 11:28-44]:...When Jesus saw her [Mary] weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus began to weep. ...Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. Jesus was no plastic Saint, either. This coming week we remember, in a special, intense way, his Passion: his gut wrenching, body twisting suffering and pain. For us.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:41

Friday, April 7, 2006

Don't be Bamboozled!

One of the subjects that seems to put a lot of Christians to sleep is the study of the origins of their Bible: Revelation, Inspiration, Compilation, Preservation, Transmission and Translation. When I have offered courses on these matters, typical "Bible-believing, Bible-loving" Christians either yawn or argue against the need for such study. (I thank God for the few people I have met who are exceptions to this.) Then they hear or read about books and movies like the DaVinci Code, saying Jesus was married and had a baby with Mary Magdalene or theories that Jesus walked on ice, not water or that the resurrection was a hoax or a newly discovered manuscript called the Gospel of Judas completely overthrows the traditional account of Jesus' betrayal and death. These Christians (especially young ones) become confused, maybe doubt their faith and become skeptical. They have no answers to their own questions or the ones asked by others. Aargh! The answers come from a grasp of all the above topics, especially the matter of Canonicity. In the case of the New Testament, how did we come to have the 27 "Books" that are now included? Why not 26 or 30. There were dozens of other "Books" making the rounds among the churches in the first century. How did we settle on these particular 27 and not others. What were the criteria for inclusion? And who made the actual decision? Was it a process over a long time? When and how was the process, the canon, closed? What gives these 27 "Books" authority, and not others, such as the Gospel of Judas discussed this morning on the Today Show? In a recent discussion, a strong Christian told another that it didn't matter who wrote the "books" of the Bible. Wrong- it matter very much. The most essential criteria for determining which of the many circulating manuscripts should be accepted into the canon (the official, approved, authoritative Scripture) is authorship: apostolic authorship. There were other criteria as well. In the post below about literary hoaxes, I attached a link to Amazon. Reread the entire link. It includes excellent books for study of this whole subject, starting with two by FF Bruce. He has been one of my all time favorite scholars. Solid! Don't be bamboozled by these off-the-wall claims. Get grounded in solid evangelical scholarship about (among many things) the origins of your Bible.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 09:59

Wednesday, April 5, 2006

The Origins of Government

Many of you do not seem to have studied the material on my website about Government. This is an introduction-<http://www.freewebs.com/reformationinstitute/government.htm> THERE IS A THRONE (AUTHORITY) AT THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE The Basic Concept: Government, as such, is from God. There are several types of God-ordained government. Civil Government is but one of these. The first, most basic type of Government is the government of God Himself. God is Authority. He is the supreme Authority- the Sovereign and Governor of all Creation. God delegates His authority and exercises it through Agents-God delegated His authority to rule the Creation, to have dominion over it on His behalf, to Man [Humanity] The naming of the animals demonstrated that authority. Husbands have God-given authority in a marriage. Parents, have it, in God's stead, over their children Moses and his Elders had authority over all the Tribes of Israel collectively and the Heads of Families had authority over the Tribes individually. Later, Judges, and then Kings, ruled the Nation. The Levites were given authority in the Temple. By God's design, this is a hierarchical world throughout, not anarchic or egalitarian. Authority is intrinsic to Creation, not an anomaly or evil. This means that force and coercion is essential to maintaining the Creation. It is not valid or necessary to equate force and coercion with violence or oppression, nor is Authority to be equated with Authoritarianism. What is crucial is who exercises force and how, why and when. Rom 13:1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

Many Christian writers on the subject of government focus on Freedom and Human Rights. They rightly teach that the Declaration of Independence, our Federal and State Constitutions and various Bills of Rights were all shaped by Biblical, Judeo-Christian principles and values. These writers derive most of their Teaching about government from Systematic Theology. For example, The foundation of all freedoms is the freedom of the individual. It is Christianity that teaches the value of the individual and its corollary, the equality of all individuals, by its doctrine of personal salvation (Christ died for all.) Christianity teaches personal choice (Whosoever will may..., etc) and this leads to freedom of conscience and religion and then on to separation of Church & State. The separation of Powers, as checks and balances, is based on the Doctrine of The Fall and Human Depravity. The concept of Natural (inalienable) Rights in the Declaration of Independence is derived from the Natural Law teaching of the Apostle Paul. The material on my website gives a simple outline of Principles derived from the Bible that are vital to the subject of Civil Government. Basic Biblical Principles were enlarged upon by the Protestant Reformers, and their followers, and eventually became the basis for the republican form of government of the United States of America- particularly, Covenant became Contract. The decentralized government hierarchy in Israel developed into the three branches we know as Executive, Legislative and Judicial. The theological reason for the three branches was the sinful nature of Man- it required restraint, checks and balances. The political and historical reason was fear of Tyranny (King George). I hope you will check out my website on these matters. More will follow.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:10

Tuesday, April 4, 2006

Why was Jesus born?

I have been affirming the historicity of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus [below]. That said, it must also be clear that the historic Christian faith does not put a lot of emphasis or importance upon the historical man, Jesus. He came, God incarnate, to live and die for theological reasons. In the current, popular arguments about the man Jesus [was he married, did he father a child, did he die of old age] these theological reasons are ignored completely. Among left-leaning evangelicals and Roman Catholic social activists, likewise, the emphasis is upon Jesus the Man, as role model for suffering servant hood, the Man with compassion for the poor and marginalized or the Man who was a radical political Revolutionary. This is a misreading or Jesus- a misrepresentation of what his life and, especially, his death were about. Jesus himself, as well as the Apostles, place the importance of his life and death elsewhere. Here is a brief overview of what Jesus himself said was the purpose of his death. What the Apostles added later is derived from Jesus' own teaching.

Key to these sayings, is the consciousness Jesus had that he was the prophesied Messiah. At the beginning of his public work on earth, he heard the voice of God announcing from heaven: "Thou art my Son", a Messianic declaration from Psalm 2:7 and "my Beloved, in whom I am well pleased" another reference to the Messiah from Isaiah 42:1ff This was, significantly, at Jesus' Baptism, in which he identified with sinners, and is followed by his Temptation in the Wilderness. There Jesus wrestles with who he is and makes his decision to fulfill the work of the Messiah. The day comes when the disciples of Jesus recognize and confess that he is, indeed, the Messiah (Matt 16, 17) Immediately after that illumination, and in light of it, Jesus begins to teach his disciples the meaning of his coming death (Matt 16:21, Mark 8:32, Luke 9:22). Three times he addresses this matter with the disciples (Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:32f with parallels in Matt and Luke) . This was the major theme of their last months together. Indeed, most of what we call the Gospels are devoted to the last week of the life of Jesus. They are not biographies. His suffering, death and resurrection receive far more attention than anything else in the narratives (which is why they are called "Gospels") whereas many Christians today give far more attention to the works or teachings of Jesus. On each of these three occasions, Jesus says he "must" suffer and die. This means his death was inevitable. Activists have agreed, saying, of course, Jesus' death was inevitable because he was challenging the political and religious establishment. He was radical in his behavior and teaching. Thus, he courted death and was finally killed by his enemies. However, "must" also means indispensable, necessary, required or planned. He was following a predetermined plan. His death was a goal in itself that must be achieved. His death was his calling and purpose. This conclusion is understood best when we remember that Jesus knew he was the prophesied Messiah. In his predictions about his suffering and death, Jesus called himself the "Son of Man" (Mark 8:31, 9:31, 10:32f), a title for the Messiah. Jesus especially identified himself with the Suffering Servant described by Isaiah (Luke 22:37 with Isaiah 53:12) The role of the Suffering Servant was to die and that, for a specific purpose. Jesus teaches his disciples exactly what the purpose of his life and death was- Mark 10:32 And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, 33 saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. 34 And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise." 42 Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 43 But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." The Son of Man, Jesus, came to earth, in order to give his life as a ransom for many. This was his vocation. He did not come primarily to feed the poor or care for the sick and dying. His Luke 4 sermon did indeed announce what he would do during his earthly ministry. It was not why he came from heaven to earth. He did not come to inaugurate the Old Testament "Jubilee" or some plan for the distribution of wealth. Jesus was born to die. He was born to die as a ransom. He was born to die as a ransom for many. We are all to be servants of others. Jesus death as a ransom for others was the service he came to render. Our service may well include clothing the naked or sheltering the homeless. His service was his death. Earlier, Jesus had said- Mark 8:35 whoever would save his life will lose [kill, destroy or abolish] it, but whoever loses [kills, destroys or abolishes] his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. 36 what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit [damage or lose] his life? 37 For what can a man give in return [in exchange] for his life [if it has been damaged or lost? Nothing!- implied] Now Jesus says, he will give his life as a "ransom" for others. The implication is that the life of Jesus would work as an exchange for those lives that had been damaged or lost. This would be his "service". This concept may be found in texts like this- Psalm 49: (NASB) 7 No man can by any means redeem his brother or give to God a ransom for him-- 8 For the redemption of his soul is costly, And he should cease trying forever-- The Greek word translated "ransom" [lutron] "consistently denotes the payment of a ransom price substitutionary in character" "The word is always used to denote equivalent." Morris, p.29f Their is no

concern on to whom a ransom was paid, but on the freedom gained by it for whomever was captive. The word "for" in the phrase "ransom for many" is also very important. The most common meaning of the preposition [anti] is "instead of", "in place of". It implies substitution. The ransom Jesus would give to secure freedom was his life, offered as a substitute for the captive. Isaiah 53:10 ...the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, He will bear their iniquities. 12 ...He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors. This text says more than the one in Mark 8, but there are important similarities and the Prophet is talking about the Suffering Servant with whom Jesus identified. Our last key text wherein Jesus explains the meaning of his death contains his words during the Last Supper-Matt 26:27 (NASV) And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; 28 for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. He died for [peri = on account of, because of, concerning] many [sinners] for [eis = unto, in order to] the forgiveness of their sins. Jesus said his coming death would provide the blood that would seal the New Covenant God was to offer His Elect People. It would include the forgiveness of their sins. Jeremiah 31:31 (NASV) "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ...for they will all know Me,..." declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." All of this makes clear, in his own words, why Jesus came from Heaven to earth- why he was born as one of us. It explains the purpose of his life and death. He was born to die, shedding his blood for the forgiveness of our sins, ransoming us from condemnation. For further study, I recommend The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross, Leon Morris and The Death of Christ by James Denney

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 22:10

What's Wrong with this Picture?

In the post below this one [Lierary Hoaxes], I insisted that the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus are events grounded in history. That is an absolute essential doctrine. Why is it, then, that so many Christians and Churches display Salvador Dali's painting of what seems to be Jesus on a cross? His painting of what seems to be the Last Supper is also very common. Dali is considered, by many Christians, to be a great Christian artist. Dali was a "Surrealist"- definitely not a Christian. Google any art history website. Among many other things, Dali and the Surrealists were greatly influenced by Freud and Jung and were very much into exploring the "unconscious" and dreams. What catches the attention of most viewers are the unusual angle and viewer's perspective of the figure on a cross. Christians should note where it is. It is hanging suspended in the air. It is not grounded, literally. This is not the Cross of the Gospel. It is a dream-like, mystical symbol, reflecting something in Dali's unconscious. It does not correspond to the historical event of Jesus's crucifixion here on earth. Neither does Dali's painting about what many think is the Last Supper. The image of the Jesus-figure seated at the table is transparent. The viewer can see a boat through his chest! The supposed disciples at the table seem to be more like monks bowed in prayer. This painting, too, does not correspond to the historical events in the Upper Room and is another dream-like mystical symbol. These paintings are not "true" and should not be hung on the walls, or otherwise displayed, in churches.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 09:27

Monday, April 3, 2006

Literary Hoaxes

Last night, I listened for a short time to the TV interview of the author of a new book spreading a very ancient heresy: the resurrection of Jesus was a hoax. That has been effectively repudiated many times. This author was attempting to prove his point from the New Testament itself. He bases much of his story on a few key Greek words and phrases. Oddly, these few parts of the New Testament are reliable and important to him, while many, many more words and passages that repudiate what the man was saying, somehow, are not reliable and important. How can that be? Out Faith is historical. The incarnation of God is an historical, time-space event. The crucifixion ("under Pontius Pilate") really happened. So did the resurrection- the Apostles went to great lengths to prove that point. In turn, the record of this history is also historically reliable. That means the New Testament is historically reliable. Christians should know that, without a doubt. The real hoaxes are the books currently being promoted by the media about the life and death of Jesus. <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0802822193/002-4113006-7714421?v=glance&n=283155><http://www.ivpress.com/cgi-ivpress/book.pl/code=1975>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 16:17

Thursday, March 23, 2006

Movie Reviews and Why Christians Disagree

'Spanglish' received mixed to poor reviews from most reviewers I read. None of them saw in the movie what my wife and I did. We viewed it twice and agreed that the story was mostly about the relationship between the house maid and her daughter. Among the subplots, we thought the most important was the obnoxious, selfish behavior of the lady of the house, particularly toward the maid's daughter and her own. None of the reviewers agreed with us. Some of them even saw racism in the film, which we did not. As a sweet mother-daughter film, we enjoyed it. Then we tried a film recommended by most reviewers as a really funny comedy- "Big Lebowski". The reviewers raved. We found the film disgusting and very weird. I ejected it from the player after maybe 15 minutes. Tonight, we tried what we were also told was a good comedy- "Meet the Parents". We found it to be very stupid and unappealing, to say the least. We gave it maybe 15 minutes. My point is that movie reviews tell us more about the reviewers than the movies. They reveal the reviewers' world view- perspective on how the world works. They reveal their prior personal experiences, both with life and other movies. Often, as with these movies reviews I mention, their perspective and values are very, very different than ours. Same with books. Someone will tell me how blessed they were by what the author has to say, eg in a Christian "self-help" book. I'll read it and get nothing. I don't relate to the author's experiences. When he starts telling me about life and relationships and problems, they do not correlate with my life and relationships and problems. He has not been talking about life- he has been describing his life. Same about relationships, eg, marriage- not everybody's- his. And the problems he says everyone struggles with are not- he struggles with them, not everyone, not me. All of this is connected with my growing interest in why Christians do not agree with each other. Often it is like movie and book reviews. The latter are different because the life experience and personal needs and values of the reviewers are different. That goes a long way to explaining how we can all look at the same images on the screen and see something so very different- how we can all read the same words printed on the page and each interpret it so very differently. It is what we bring, within us, to the movie and to the book. This is also a major reason why Christians disagree (or agree) with each other.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 21:54

Wednesday, March 22, 2006

New Website Material.

Is there a Biblical form of Government? Is is Democracy? A Republic?Is a government "of the people, by the people and for the people" a Biblical concept?Does separation of Church and State mean separation of God and State?Does God and His Word have authority over America? over all nations?I have just posted study notes from my Institute Foundations Course on this website. There have been glitches setting it up, so I hope you will pardon the "construction"<http://freewebs.com/reformationinstitute/www.npgpro.com/cal> will also take you there. Suggestions for improvement welcome

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 19:51

Thursday, March 16, 2006

Our Terrible God

A post below calls for God to be worshipped with reverence. Behind much of our casual corporate worship these days is a concept of God that has a diminished sense of His Awfulness. We have forgotten how terrible and terrifying He can be. The Arms that hold and comfort us are all-powerful. They can also crush us. Another post below speaks of Peace-that God calls us to peace-making, commonly understood to mean non-violence. Some want to have us believe God is always nonviolent and peaceful: our Model for how to live with others. Not so. Today's QT reading reveals another side to the God we worship- a side that evokes worship in fear and trembling. Jeremiah 15:1-9 Then the Lord said to me: Send [my People] out of my sight, and let them go! And when they say to you, 'Where shall we go?' you shall say to them: Thus says the Lord: to pestilence, to the sword; to famine, to captivity. I will appoint over them four kinds of destroyers, says the Lord: the sword to kill, the dogs to drag away, and the birds of the air and the wild animals of the earth to devour and destroy. I will make them a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth Who will have pity on you, O Jerusalem, or who will bemoan you? You have rejected me, says the Lord, so I have stretched out my hand against you and destroyed you. I have destroyed my people; they did not turn from their ways. Their widows became more numerous than the sand of the seas; I have brought against the mothers of youths a destroyer at noonday; I have made anguish and terror fall upon her suddenly. And the rest of them I will give to the sword before their enemies, says the Lord. What brought about this divine discontent with that nation? Their idolatry and disobedience of His Law. America is just as sinful as Israel ever was. What makes us think we shall escape God's wrath as a nation?

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 09:00

Saturday, March 4, 2006

Pushing Parameters

In the Post below, I wrote that, among other things, we all read the Bible through some theological grid or lens. I mentioned Dispensationalism and Covenant Theology. There is a third grid I should mention. Many Evangelicals are simply "evangelical". Their Theology (if they even call it that) is simply a set of basic, core beliefs or doctrines. Many churches subscribe to the Statement of Faith published by the National Association of Evangelicals. It is neither Dispensational nor Covenant, but doctrines held in common by evangelicals every where. It allows Believers to find whatever they want in the Bible within a few certain parameters. Many of today's Christians are increasingly comfortable with this approach. It allows for more personal freedom and choices to meet individual needs. The fewer the parameters (boundaries and rules) the better.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 07:26

Friday, March 3, 2006

Why don't we agree?

I have written and spoken many times about this: what we get out of Scripture is primarily determined by how we approach it. There is no such thing as just opening the Book and thus "seeing" what it teaches. We all open the Book under the influence of something or some one.. We all read it through some lens. We all interpret what we read through some grid. What do "Christians" who believe the Bible teaches or supports Slavery Polygamy Healing Miracles Speaking in Tongues Intentional Community have in common?

They give priority to Narrative portions of Scripture over Didactic portions. [Stories and Description over Teaching and Prescription] They go to the examples they find in the Gospels or Acts for their basic, primary Scriptural support: "We just follow the Bible", means the stories they find in the Bible. The argument goes: Abraham and Moses and David were polygamists. Solomon had slaves, as did many of the Christians in the Early Church. No where do God, Jesus or the Apostles condemn or forbid these practices. Jesus, of course, went about working miracles. Christians in the earliest church spoke in tongues, as well as shared all their goods in common. Therefore, we should do all that today. On the other hand, the main reason I reject all 5 of these practices is because they are not plainly taught or prescribed in Scripture. And what is taught does not lead to, or prohibits, these practices. I chose to give priority to the Didactic over the Narrative: Romans over Acts. Many Believers I know really have enjoyed the "Left Behind" series of novels. They earnestly expect the Anti-Christ and look forward to the Rapture and are convinced that the prophecies about nation of Israel, its Land and future Kingdom, will be fulfilled for today's Jews or their direct descendents. On the other hand I do not. I do not believe any of that scenario is based on the Bible. This greatly offends my friends who are convinced that it is. What could explain such a vastly different interpretation of the Bible? The Rules we use for that interpretation. They see the Bible through the grid of Dispensationalism, while I read it through the grid of Covenant Theology. I became convinced to adopt the latter and to reject the former (which I once believed) on the basis of the Didactic portions of Scripture. Wait a minute- Dispensationalists, generally, also give priority to the Didactic and usually [not always] reject the 5 practices listed above. What explains that? Another Rule, or more specifically, the Rules about how to interpret prophetic and apocalyptic language. Actually, even more basic, is what we believe the nature of the Bible to be. What is Revelation and Inspiration? How was the Bible composed, by whom, for whom, where and when. What is the relationship of the "Old Testament" to the "New"? Then there is the matter of extra-biblical Authority. What role does the Church universal and historic ("Catholic"), Tradition and Church History play in our interpretation? What about the authority of the local church or faith community [denomination] in which we live or the influence of significant others in our lives? What role does the Holy Spirit and our "inner voices" and emotional needs play (many who have believed there is no Biblical basis for miraculous healing, look for that healing when a loved one desperately needs it) Finally, personality and temperament, as well as life experience, often become what ultimately determines how we read and use Scripture and what we "hear" when we open its pages. All of this is far more influential than many realize or admit. All of this means that equally sincere, committed Christians disagree. We must stick with those positions we are convinced are based on the Bible, even if it means parting ways, but with the humility and mutual respect for each other that comes from knowing all that I have said above.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 16:52

Thursday, February 23, 2006

The Cultural Mandate

Taken from lecture notes from the Course I teach on Genesis-GE 1:27 God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Man is given dominion over all other creatures and the earth itself- 1:26, 28 1:26 let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." 28 fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." RULE = RADAH [RAW DAW] = dominate, subjugate, prevail against, tread down SUBDUE = KABASH [KAW BASH] = dominate, subdue, eg- Numbers 32:29, Josh 18:1, 1 Chron 22:18 "Man" is to exercise authority and control over all other creatures and the earth. In chapter 2, the earth becomes a particular garden and "Man" becomes a particular couple (Adam & Eve). Adam and Eve are to work, cultivate [AW BAD], take care of, guard, protect [SHAW MAR] the Garden - 2:15, 4:9 Some interpret 1:28 in light of 2:15. In that case, the universal command in 1:28, "Rule & Subdue, means "Cultivate & Care for" all Creation. The command to rule & subdue applies to the whole earth. The command in 2:15 to Work & Keep (cultivate & care) applies to the Garden of Eden, which no longer exists. A better interpretation combines the two commands: Humanity is to rule & subdue the earth and turn it into a garden [ie, make it fertile and productive] to be cultivated and cared for.

THE STEWARDSHIP (CULTURAL) MANDATE God is the Creator-Owner of the Land (Psalm 24:1, Job 41:11) As His representative, i.e.- as His Image, Man is God's Steward [lieu-tenant]. He is responsible to make Creation productive for humanity while maintaining its well-being. Starting with what God 'finished', human beings are to apply their God-given creative minds and abilities to continue His work of making order out of chaos, giving form and content to the earth. This is the primary expectation God has of all people. This is our primary purpose in living. It requires rationality and creativity (invention) and will involve Culture, Cities and Civilization. It will involve the Economic Goals and Methods described elsewhere on this Blog. There are three Great Mandates and they answer three Great World View Questions-1. What are we here for? Stewardship: Cultivating Creation into Civilization 2. Why should we do this? Love for God and Neighbor 3. How are we to go about getting it done? Making Disciples: Teaching peoples from all Nations to obey the Lord

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:07

Wednesday, February 22, 2006

Interpreting the Law of God

Admittedly, a major difficulty with the use of the Law is determining which laws apply to what people and when. Laws that are historically conditioned, ie-Laws that apply to the internal affairs of a particular nation at a particular time in its history, may, arguably, not apply to any other. We start with Laws that are universal, those that pre-date the Nation of Israel, Decalogue and the entire Mosaic Law. Commands or Laws found in Genesis 1-3, given to "Man" (not limited specifically Adam and Eve), would have universal application, eg- the Law about Marriage, as well as the Cultural Mandate. We next consider the Mosaic Law, especially the Decalogue, as our source of God-given, universal laws. The Law of God commands that parents be honored, there must be fidelity in marriage, children must obey their parents, property not be stolen, witnesses in court must speak the truth, people must be paid wages for their labor and the wages must be fair, no one must be murdered or raped, the land must not be destroyed, animals must not be abused, widows and orphans must be cared for by their extended family. These Laws are not ceremonial or historically specific civil laws.

Principles of the Law When we teach that Christians must follow the Law of God, as His Directive for our daily lives, we often mean the Principles (values, morals, ethics) derived from the Law. (We look at many examples in my Course) We affirm completely that sinners are saved by grace and not by obeying the Law. But- the Law of God, properly interpreted, teaches us how to live, both by its original intent and by applying the principles involved. 1. Christians seek to obey those Biblical Commands and Principles that have universal and timeless application. Biblical Commands that apply only to a specific time, people or place are not authoritative to Christians today, eg- the command not to eat of the forbidden fruit in the middle of the Garden of Eden was given only to Adam & Eve and for when they lived there. 2. Biblical commands that apply to marriage, family, property, work, money, care of the poor, care of animals and the environment, criminal justice and government are universal and authoritative today. The faith that saves is the faith that obeys the Law of God in all such matters. 3. The principles and their applications must be in honest harmony with the original intent. eg- the principle that Believers should not marry unbelievers must not be used to teach against inter-racial marriage 4. Application of Law and Principles must be in harmony with the teaching of Jesus and his Apostles (the New Testament) 5. Application should be made in light of the Tradition [and Counsel] of the Historic Church

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 08:28

Tuesday, February 21, 2006

AN OUTLINE OF BIBLICAL ECONOMIC PRINCIPLES

The following are some notes from a Course I have been teaching -Economics: "a social science concerned chiefly with description and analysis of the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services"
Merriam-Webster Economics is about the choices people make with regard to scarce resources – People chose to sacrifice some things in order to obtain other things because there is a scarcity of those things and nothing scarce is free (every scarce thing has a price). Economics is about the exchanges people make of things [time, possessions, money, etc] desired less, for things [time, possessions, money, etc] desired more. These choices and exchanges are affected by values and incentives. They should also be determined by long-range (rather than immediate) consequences. The Bible does not have a detailed blueprint for any particular Economic System, e.g.- Capitalism or Socialism. What it does have in abundance are moral and ethical principles that are very relevant to economic topics. These Biblical principles provide the values that guide economic choices and behavior.

The Four Biblical Principles are Stewardship, Sharing, Work, Growth These principles are to guide the economic decisions about what to produce, for whom and how, when and where to distribute product (goods and services) THE BASICS : the Ultimate Goals of Economics. These goals shall be achieved! The Earth is for Life, especially human life [Think One Race] [Think Global] Growth: global population and its needs are expected to continually increase; therefore, so must production [God has promised that resources will not be scarce] Sharing of natural resources with all ---all are to have enough. No monopolizing for private greed or gain (individuals, corporations, nations) Work: everyone (male and female) around the globe must have a part and do their part in the economic process More Biblical Basics- Basic Methods of achieving Economic Goals "Private Property" [understood as private responsibility] Working that property [capital] to make wealth Workers respected and treated properly [as Humans- in the Image of God] Accumulating that wealth for investment to make more wealth Trade (voluntary distribution) by Supply and Demand These together are the normative, essential, way to fulfill the Cultural Mandate: Preserving cultivating and developing natural resources (the eco-system, the environment), in order to sustain an ever growing Humanity, is the ultimate Economic Goal and God's unchanging will. Developing cities, culture and civilization will be essential to the economic process.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 19:07

Sunday, February 19, 2006

Forgiven, but accountable

Psalm 99:8"...you were a God who forgave them, yet punished them for their evil deeds."To be forgiven is a wonderful thing; but, it does not excuse us from the consequences of our sinful acts. The Piper must always be paid.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:22

Saturday, February 4, 2006

Worship Tomorrow

Hebrews 12:22-24a,28-29 About Acceptable Worship We have come before God... We have come before countless angels making festival, before the assembly of the firstborn citizens of heaven. We have come before God, who is judge of all, before the spirits of the just made perfect. We have come before Jesus, We are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken: so let us give thanks and offer to God acceptable worship, full of reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire. Tomorrow is the Lord's Day. Here we have the reason for Worship. And here we have acceptable worship described: it is to be full of reverence and awe; For some of us that could mean periods of silence and meditation and the entire Service conducted with dignity and proper decorum. But then, the very next Scripture, in my devotions today from Oremus, goes in a different direction Psalm 149 Alleluia! Sing to the Lord a new song; sing his praise in the congregation of the faithful. Let Israel rejoice in his maker; let the children of Zion be joyful in their king. Let them praise his name in the dance; let them sing praise to him with timbrel and harp. If worship is to be regulated by the mandates of Scripture (ie- only what is commanded is appropriate in Worship. Whatever is not mandated is not appropriate), then here we have warrant for joyous praise music accompanied by tambourine and harp (other Psalms add other string instruments, trumpets and cymbals) as well as dancing. I will not be watching the Grammy Awards next week- I do not like that kind of music. Actually, I seldom listen to any of today's Christian music. I prefer Bach and Vivaldi and Mozart, as well as quiet jazz. Occasionally, I'll get nostalgic and enjoy some of the popular music from the 50s, 60's and 70s and the Big Bands from the 30s and 40s. Whatever the type and style of music, the essential point is to sing his praise in the congregation.... Let Israel rejoice in his maker; let the children of Zion be joyful in their king, while being full of reverence and awe and being very mindful that our God is a consuming fire. The latter is the real regulative principle.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 07:47

Thursday, February 2, 2006

A Day of Revelation

Today, in the "secular" calendar, is "Groundhog Day" in America. Will the marmot see it's shadow? The Nation waits for the revelation about Winter. Will it last 6 more weeks? Today, in the Church calendar, commemorates the Presentation of the baby Jesus in the Temple, 40 days after his birth [similiar, but different, than the custom of having a new baby baptized]. This, too, is a revelation- Truth incarnate is now in the world. Our Nation does not wait for this revelation at all, but the Faithful in the Nation rejoice, as does the old man, Simeon, in today's Gospel reading-Luke 2:22-40 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, 'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.' Light reveals what is otherwise hidden. And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed...How people repond to Jesus reveals the truth about who they really are and how they will spend Eternity.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 07:23

Saturday, January 21, 2006

The Truly Depraved Mind

We image God, but we are not God. The temptation that led to the original (first) sin was the sin of Secular Humanism: believing the measure of man is Man; Christian Humanism teaches the measure of Man is God. Compare what God says about the king of Tyre- Ezekiel 28:2 'this is what the sovereign Lord says: "in the pride of your heart you say, "I am a god; ...but you are a man and not a god, though you think you are as wise as a god. There is more: The temptation was to be like "god-with-the-knowledge-of-good-and-evil", ie- to be as wise as God- to seek and possess the wisdom that belongs to God alone. Job 28:12 "But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell? 23 God understands the way to it ... 28 And he said to man, 'The fear of the Lord-that is wisdom..." Proverbs 9:10 the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom Adam & Eve were deceived into believing that they could have the wisdom of God without God,---simply by eating the "apple"; specifically, without obedience of His Law Psalm 19:7 the law of the Lord is perfect,... the statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. 8 the precepts of the Lord are right, ... the commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. cf that verse with what Eve thought about the "apple" in Gen 3:6 -When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was ...desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.

THE TEMPTATION WAS TO BE AUTONOMOUS Seeking autonomy (seeking to think, to have knowledge & wisdom, apart from God and the Law of God, like Adam and Eve) has been "Man's" deceit and sin ever since. This led to substituting Error for Truth. Not only are Error and Truth opposites, they oppose each other: the Fall of "Man" is the rise of what is called The Antithesis ["enmity"]. Human beings not only seek autonomy from God is their Knowledge, they do this with animus against God. There is not only rebellion against God in the heart of human beings, there is hostility. Many (most?) contemporary Evangelicals miss or deny this important point. ROMANS 1:18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth...19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. 25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator 28 since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind. The rest of this chapter in Romans makes clear that the sexual immorality of our culture is a result and symptom of this depraved mind. While sinners are accountable for their immorality, this Scripture states, in no uncertain terms, that the anger and judgment of God are not primarily against that immorality but its origin: 1:18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against ... men who suppress the truth...19 ... about God (this is what is meant by a "depraved mind") Many Christians rant about overt homosexuality; but, the later is a symptom, not the disease. The disease, the really serious core problem, is the human heart (mind) and its insistence on playing "god" and creating a culture that is not only autonomous, but hostile toward God. This post is based on my study guide for Genesis, chap 3. I'll add more later.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:33

Thursday, January 19, 2006

The Greatest Sin in the Bible? Idolatry

The New Testament specifies three Idols. It warns that the unbridled appetites and lusts of the body can become an Idol- we believe we need to satisfy them for a "good life". In fact, they, collectively, control us. They enslave us and eventually destroy us. Likewise, the New Testament warns that Money can do the same thing. Jesus names this Idol, Mammon. The third Idol that the New Testament warns about is the State. We come to believe we need it for our security and well-being. It, too, ends up enslaving us. Bob Goudzwaard, in his book *Idols of our Time*, says: "an ideology arises when idolatry takes root in the pursuit of a legitimate end." (his emphasis). Science, technology and the economy are legitimate and necessary to the life of a nation. Each has a valid, important role to play in national life. Each can become an idol. Each can be, and has been, absolutized and become an object of faith -

When we believe making money is the measure of all things, economics becomes Economism. When science is believed to be the only valid way of knowing, science becomes Scientism. When we believe technology is the only way to accomplish results, then technology becomes Technicism. Goudzwaard is convinced that Scientism, Technicism and Economism are the three major idols of our times. It has been said that these 3 idols are inseparable and thus really form a trinity: one god in three "persons"- "Scientism offers omniscience, Technicism provides omnipotence, Economism... extends to all...material prosperity- nothing short of secular salvation" p.138 These gods are not equal, however. "Profit maximization and economic growth before all else- at all costs reign supreme" p.139 *Transforming Vision*, Walsh & Middleton [italics added] Certainly, many Americans, many Christian Americans, look to these Ideologies for the security, power, control, meaning and purpose of the nation, as well of their personal lives. God alone can give security, protection, strength, life, purpose and meaning. When we look to anything else- the economy, the stock market, government, a political party or leader, our country, nationality or ethnicity, science, technology, a "cause" of any kind, formal education- to give us security, protection, strength, life, purpose and meaning instead of God, we have an idol.. Americans, American Christians, have many idols and ideologies in their hearts. That makes such Christians practicing Pagans. Once our idols (Idolatry) are identified, we must repent and rip them from our hearts.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 13:25

Wednesday, January 18, 2006

The Sins of Sodom

We had a discussion recently about the connection between social injustice and profligacy. Is there a cause and effect? The specific topic was the city of Sodom. It was said to be full of wickedness and unrighteousness in general terms. (See Gen 13:13, 18:20-33) We are told that many of the citizens did "abominable things" (Ezek 16:50) They were a proud and arrogant people and lived in great luxury. Two particular evils are singled out for condemnation: 1. The practice of homosexual acts (sodomy). See Genesis 19. Neglect of the poor among them. See Ezekiel 16:49. Conservative Christians emphasize the first. More liberal Christians emphasize the second. Both are evils were prevalent- it is not one or the other. The question is about the connection between the two. The Bible itself puts far more emphasis on the evil of social injustice than it does with sodomy and connects the former often with the life style of the "rich and famous" as in Amos 3:13-4:3. Elsewhere, on the Blog, I have discussed the connection between idolatry and oppression in the Bible. Those who oppress the poor tend to be idolaters. The so-called worship services connected with idolatry are also frequently associated with debauchery and sexual immorality e.g.- 1 Cor 10:7-8 and many prophets condemn the practice e.g.- Hosea 4:10b-19. The conclusion seems to be that there is a causal connection between social injustice and profligacy, luxury and idolatry.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:57

Thursday, January 12, 2006

Herman Who?

Hermen Eutics, ie- Hermeneutics: the study of methods and principles used to interpret a text such as the Bible. All kinds of Christians declare that the Bible is the authority for what they believe. What they believe is "according to the Bible". Then how do we explain why these Christians disagree? How does the one Book teach so many different and contradictory things? It is not about the Bible. It is about hermeneutics. If someone insists they go by the Bible, ask them what methods and principles they use to interpret the Bible. Some earnest Believer will lament that other Believers do not agree with him or her. "It's in the Bible. It is so clear!" Well, it is not so clear if the Bible is read from a different point of view. Don't tell me you go by the Bible. Tell me what grid you use through which you read the Bible.

Case in point: I'm preparing today for the next Bible Course I am going to teach. I realize I read the Bible from a Reformed perspective, ie- as a Calvinist. More than that, I interpret it according to Covenant Theology. This shapes what I will teach in the class. Of course, I believe, conversely, that study of Scripture led me to both Calvinism and Covenant Theology. (There is a hermeneutics behind the hermeneutics.) These days, when Theology and Doctrine is disparaged, many seem to either go by some private, individualistic and subjective, "Well, I don't care what you say, this is what the Holy Spirit tells me the verse means" method to an increasing reliance on sociology, archaeology and comparative religion methodology, often in the service of some politically correct agenda or ideology. Such folks do not put a lot of value on Systematic Theology and centuries of Tradition. Be that as it may, we all read the Bible through eye glasses of some description. We need to acknowledge that, as well as be able to defend why we chose the kind of glasses we use.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:26

Sunday, December 11, 2005

A Very Misused Passage about Serving the Poor

Mother Teresa was often quoted as saying she simply served the Christ she found in everyone, particularly the poor. She based this concept on Matt 25. Many social activists use the words of Jesus, found in Matt 25:31-46, to mandate caring for all the homeless, naked, sick, and imprisoned found in the world. "Inasmuch as you have done it to the least of these, you have done it to me.", Jesus said. The problem here is that this is a serious misuse of what Jesus said. Everytime I hear it, which is often, I want to protest- so here goes. First off, the text is about how certain people come to enter Eternal Life. The common use of the text means that people are saved, simply and only, on the basis of works of charity. Absolutely nothing else, period. Obviously that is contrary to the Gospel and the rest of the Bible. Sinners are saved by grace only through Christ only on the basis of faith only. Helping the homeless is not a plan of salvation. This is a false Gospel and misunderstanding of the words of Jesus quoted in Matt 25. Second, the text concerns the treatment of the brothers and sisters of Jesus. It does not say that the poor are his siblings. It says the siblings are the poor. The "least of these" refers to people who are disciples of Jesus, not simply to anyone and everyone that society considers "least". Unbelievers, no matter what their social status, are not the brothers and sisters of Jesus. Only disciples are. To say that someone has a personal relationship with Jesus simply and only because they are homeless or hungry is not true. Sinners are not saved by starvation. Third, to misuse this passage is to miss the use it warrants.

What might that be? The Apostles were commissioned to go into all the world and preach the Gospel of the Kingdom. They were to make disciples in all nations, by baptizing and teaching those who came to faith in the Gospel through their preaching. These Apostles, and those who took up their mission after them, would have a hard lot of it. They would be tortured, starved, stripped and thrown in prisons everywhere. They would be poor and homeless. The letters of Paul and the Book of Acts documents all of this. The words of Jesus recorded in Matt 25 are encouragement to non-apostles to help them and other like minded missionaries in their ministry miseries. Verses for this interpretation? See Matt 5:19, 10:8-13, 18-19, 40-42, 11:11 of 18:3-6, 10-14, 12:46-50, 20:26; 23:11, 28:10 of 23:8 Bible Background Commentary, Craig Keener Commentary on Gospel of Matthew, Craig Keener Expositors Bible Commentary, Vol 8 (Matt), DA Carson Matthew, a Commentary, Robert Gundry Actually, evangelical Christians really know (or should know) all of this. That is what makes the misuse of this passage so troubling. Of course, Christians will minister to the homeless and hungry of the world; but, this is not the passage to base that ministry on.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 17:14

Evangelism Then and Now

Acts 2:36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." The Message: Jesus is Lord and Christ (= God and Messiah) He was "made" that by God's action of raising Him from the dead. (vv 22-36 ...therefore) 37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" This is an invitation to the Jews of Jesus' day to repent of what they did to Jesus: they collectively crucified the Messiah. They were to repent of this terrible sin. And that they did, as they were cut to the heart with their guilt. 38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." The "evangelism" of the crowd, by the Apostle Peter, was a warning and a plea to them to get saved from the judgement sure to come upon them for their dastardly deed. The expected response was Baptism: "What are we to do?" "Repent and be baptized" That action, in turn, added them as members of the new First Christian Church. 40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. The name of the coming Vision New England's Student Congress in Boston next month capsulizes the message of today evangelism: "Life Hurts, God Heals". My experience has convinced me that people who are not hurting, therefore, are not interested in God. Or if they are hurting and turn to

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God, it is only for the healing. Once that has come, in most cases, God goes. Of course God heals our hurts. But, that is not the Gospel or evangelism in any New Testament sense.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 13:58

Tuesday, December 6, 2005

JUSTICE IS A PRIORITY OF GOD What is Justice?

Isaiah 1:17 seek justice, correct oppression
Isaiah 28:17 I will make justice the measuring line
Isaiah 30:18- the LORD is a God of justice.
Isaiah 56:1- This is what the LORD says: "Maintain justice and do what is right"
Isaiah 61:8- I, the LORD, love justice
Micah 6:8...what does the LORD require of you but to do justice
Amos 5:15 Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice
God judges a nation, a people, by their record and practice of Justice- What is Justice? There is Justice when people, animals and the Land are able to enjoy their Rights, as defined by Biblical Law. Injustice is the denial of those Biblical Rights. What are Biblical Rights?

Genesis, chapters 1-2, reveals three Universal Laws or Human Rights
1. Everyone has a right to physical life- to live. No person has the right to deprive another person of life or of anything essential to living.
2. Everyone has a right to those natural resources that are essential for maintaining life. All those resources belong to God and He intends them all to be for the benefit for all people.
3. Everyone has the right to marry and produce children
In order for everyone to enjoy these Rights, everyone must also have freedom, opportunity and security.
Rights require concomitant Responsibilities. The latter are the opposite of the Rights. Therefore, there are 3 Universal Human Responsibilities revealed in Genesis 1-21. Every person has the responsibility to live and to see to it that other persons live as well
2. Everyone has the responsibility
a. to work
b. to work for the development and procurement of the necessities needed to sustain life, for self and for others
c. to work for the freedom and security needed to secure and maintain those necessities for self and for others
d. to work for equitable distribution of these necessities among all people
3. Everyone has the responsibility to marry and produce children [unless God has made this impossible in specific cases]
Additional Rights and Responsibilities are revealed in The Decalogue (Exo. 20)
The "10 Commandments", expressed as Rights, become
God has the exclusive right to our allegiance (no other gods, no idols)
God has the right to be honored, respected (His Name & His Sabbath)
People have a right to live
Human beings have the right to work and to periodically rest from work
Husbands and wives have a right to the fidelity of their spouses
Parents have the right to be honored, respected and obeyed
Property owners have a right to their property
People have a right to a fair and honest trial
Neighbors have a right to their privacy
The 10 Commandments, expressed as personal Responsibilities, become
I owe God my allegiance above all else. I owe my honor and respect to what belongs to God, especially His Name and His Day. I have the responsibility to both work and to rest periodically
I owe my parents honor, respect and obedience
I owe respect to the life of others. (I am my brother's keeper)
I am responsible to respect the marriage vows of others. I owe fidelity to my spouse. I owe respect to the property of others
I am responsible to be honest with others and to never slander them
I am responsible to stay out of other people's business
This summarizes what the Bible teaches about essential "Human Rights" and Responsibilities
There are civil rights, legal rights, employees' rights, consumer rights, etc, but Biblical Rights and Responsibilities take precedence over them all. Indeed, all other Rights are to be evaluated, accepted or rejected, in light of these God given and truly inalienable rights. There is no other valid basis for specific human rights, especially not the will of People themselves. Christians must reject the contemporary concept that Rights are defined by Society through consensus, legislation or the Courts.
Most people who insist on Justice today, are insisting upon people receiving what today's society has decided is their due (eg- Abortion, Marriage for homosexuals and economic "security" provided by the State or Federal governments). And there is almost no concern at all for responsibilities of any kind. The concept of Rights, Biblically, is religious. Rights are rooted in God, Revelation and Covenant. Remove these from the topic, there is no ground for either Rights or Justice. There is Justice when people are able to enjoy their Rights and Responsibilities as defined by Biblical Law.
Injustice is to deny people those Biblical Rights and Responsibilities. Christians are absolutely mandated by God to be people who pursue Justice. Justice they are to pursue must be defined Biblically. Our society does not do this. Biblical concern for Justice is turned on its head and many Christians tilt at the world's windmills.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 16:26

Monday, December 5, 2005

Lighting Candles for What?

I am convinced that the emphasis of Advent is misplaced. The Scripture Readings (the Candles and the Lectionary) are predominately prophesies about the Second Coming. Of course, we believe in that and want to be ready for it. But by focusing on the future, we are missing more of the message about what happened at the first Christmas. That advent was not only about the coming of God in the flesh, the Incarnation, so that He would have a body to offer as the Sacrifice for the sin of the world (Heb 10). It was the beginning of the Reign of God: Mark 1:14f Jesus came preaching the Good News that the Kingdom of God had come with his advent into the world. That Kingdom is here and now. That is the Gospel of Advent and it gets lost in the emphasis on the Future coming of the King. The candles burn because the Light has come and is shining in the darkness today! The King has come. The King is here. The King is now reigning. The King rules today. We have enthusiasm about the Second and Future Coming of the King to the degree that we are enthused about what He is doing in our world now.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:17

Saturday, December 3, 2005

The Christian and the Law of God

John 13:34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." Gal 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. James 2:8 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. The Christian [who has been justified by grace apart from Law] lives daily life under the Law of Christ: the Law of Love. The Christian is to be grounded in that Law. But what is the Law of Christ, the Law of Love? What specifically, practically, is included in loving your neighbor? Consider what is not included. James 2:8 continues with- 9 But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. AC 10:34 Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism 35 but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. Rom 2:11 For God does not show favoritism. Eph 6:9 their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him. Col 3:25 Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism. 1 Tim 5:21 I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism. James 2:1 My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. 2 Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. 3 If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," 4 have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? James 2:9 if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. Convicted by what Law? The Law of Christ? The context of v.8 is the Law of Moses- James

2 continues- 10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. 11 For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. The Command forbidding favoritism or discrimination is in the Mosaic Law as follows- Lev 19:15 Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly. Note

here that the poor are not to get preferential treatment. Poor and rich are both to be treated impartially- fairly! There will always be both groups in society. There is to be no discrimination towards anyone. Deut 16:19 Do not pervert justice or show partiality. Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. 20 Follow justice and justice alone... Loving your neighbor, the Royal Law, includes not discriminating against him, sleeping with his wife or murdering him! Loving your neighbor includes respecting his life, respecting him as a person, respecting his marriage. What it means to love our neighbors is spelled out by the Law. Without the Law, any random collection of ethics

purportedly derived from the "Love Command" or "the example of Jesus" or even "Christian Principles" is a nose of putty which can be, and has been, shaped according to changing cultural times and social values. The Decalogue, the Mosaic Law, defines "loving" a neighbor. Rom

8:8 Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. [How are we to love our fellowman? The law tells us-] 9 The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, [teach us how to love our neighbor. They are all] summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 10 Love does no harm to its neighbor. [ie- love does not steal or covet his wife or his goods, etc] Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. Christians are to "Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the [Mosaic] law..."

James 2:12 The Christian finds principles in the Law, eg- 1. Deut 25:4 Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain. This text has its obvious literal meaning and application; but, in addition, Paul applies this to Apostles / Pastors: 1 Cor 9:9 For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? [yes, originally; but,-] 10 Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest.

11 If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? 12 If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? Churches are to financially support Apostles / Pastors. That was not the intent of the OT Law, but is a principle derived from it. 1 Tim 5:17 The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. 18 For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain." 2. DT 22:10 Do not plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together. Again, there is the literal meaning and application; but, in addition, Paul applies this to Christians: 2 Cor 6:14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? 15 What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? Of course, we affirm that sinners are saved by grace and not by obeying the Law. But- The Law of God teaches us how saved people are to live, both by its original intent and by applying the principle involved. Christians seek to obey the Biblical Commands that have universal and timeless application in both senses Biblical Commands that apply only to a specific time, people or place (eg- the command not to eat of the forbidden fruit in the middle of the Garden of Eden was given only to Adam & Eve when they lived there) are not authoritative to Christians today. The Biblical commands that apply to marriage, family, property, work, money, care of the poor, care of animals and the environment, criminal justice and government that are universal are authoritative today. The faith that saves is the faith that obeys the Law of God in all such matters. We are saved by grace in order to live our daily lives according to the universal laws of God.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 09:33

Wednesday, November 30, 2005

Advice for Bible Study from a Comic Strip

One of the best "comic strips" is "For Better or Worse" (actually, more like an illustrated novel, a burgeoning literary art form. In fact, this genre was fully explained in another recent "comic strip" series: Funky Winkerbean. They are not the "funnies")Today's entry has an English teacher giving a writing assignment to her students. These are what she wants them to look for and put into a "Book Report" for class

Predominant Theme: what was the writer trying to say

Analysis of Story Development- separate main plot from subplots

List Outstanding Characters- establish their relevance to the story

What Elements were used- where was the tension, where was the turning point and what was the ultimate resolution

Good advice for reviewing any narrative book. A lot of "Bible Study" would be improved greatly, if folks followed the same formula when they approach the narrative portions of Scripture

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 11:59

The First Special day in the New Church Year

John 1:35-42

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, 'Look, here is the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, 'What are you looking for?' They said to him, 'Rabbi' (which translated means Teacher), 'where are you staying?' He said to them, 'Come and see.' They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas' (which is translated Peter). The first "Day" of the new Church Year (which began last Sunday) commemorates [today] the Apostle Andrew. He is especially remembered for introducing his brother to Jesus. That is a great statement: "He brought Simon to Jesus" and we know the rest of that story. The New Year begins with a Day focused on personal evangelism.

In reading this familiar passage, I am struck this time around with the pre-evangelism involved. Andrew was influenced by the teaching and witness of John the Baptist. Andrew had learned from John and others about the coming "Lamb of God". That phrase and the Bible Doctrine and Prophecy behind it was familiar to Andrew before he personally met Jesus. Likewise with the title and prophetic work of "Messiah"- familiar not only to Andrew, but to Peter, as well. I am mindful that these men were Jews and knew their Bible from childhood, before coming to know Jesus personally. There is a lesson here, not only about evangelism, but about the importance of what used to be called Sunday School (now something called Spiritual Formation)

More than all this, however, is the Gospel Writer's translation/explanation for his non Jewish readers, of the Hebrew titles, and therefore, the concepts. This passage can be used, not only to encourage personal evangelism, but pre-evangelism, using both Bible teaching for church people (especially children) and contextualizing that same teaching for non-church people, making it understandable to them, in terms that they know and use outside of a church context.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 10:09

Sunday, November 20, 2005

Why do Many Children Call Adults by their First Names?

Next week, Advent has come. That will be the beginning of the Church Year. Today celebrates Christ the King. Many Christians miss this, especially Evangelicals. This may be due to the penchant these days for having children calling adults by their first name. Some see this practice a sign of disrespect for adults. Others explain it as something many adults encourage because they do not want to be seen as authoritarian, lording over the children. It seems very common these days to consider Christ to be human just like us [not with reference to the Incarnation]. Christ is thought of as The Ideal Person. What do you think of Jesus? Well, he is kind, thoughtful, loves children and animals and smiles a lot. He is warm and welcoming to all. He especially identifies with the marginalized and society's stigmatized. He is a servant of all, especially the least, last and lost. He is non-judgemental, open and affirming, etc- all the correct character traits of our time. Of course, he was a pacifist, too. Dare I say, this popular picture is not a Biblical portrait. Somehow, it is often overlooked that Jesus the man, preached and warned about Judgement and Hell more than any other prophet in the Bible. He was not open and affirming of all sinners, eg- the self-righteous and religious hypocrites. He could be very angry and threw people out of the local Temple. He believed in Satan and sin and insisted all people, including the poor and marginalized, needed to repent or they would not enter God's Kingdom. What is overlooked most, is that the Jesus we worship and serve is not the Nazarene Carpenter, but the ascended King who reigns as Lord and Sovereign over all. This seems to be a hard teaching for those adults who do not want to be seen as authoritarian and, in turn, question authority and teach their children to do so also. I guess that is why they overlook Christ the King Day. Actually, Jesus has always been King Jesus. Who he is can not be understood apart from the context of the great Cosmic Conflict between Him and Satan, from the beginning of History. The Incarnation we are about to celebrate is about Jesus the King coming to earth to do battle with His Adversary (and ours). The healings and exorcisms in the Gospels are all skirmishes in the Conflict. The cross and the tomb are, too. They are the occasion when Satan was finally defeated. Jesus ascended and has been reigning in Glory ever since. Many of His People have yet to grasp and claim their Lord's Victory and live lives needlessly defeated by the defeated Ancient Serpent. Jesus is Christus Victor- Christus Rex. Today, We lift the Cup of Salvation and salute Him: Hail, King Jesus!

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:17

Does God love the Poor more than Others?

God ministers Justice equally to all- He treats all, rich and poor, fairly without partiality- with equity. God does not have a special love for the Poor- He loves everyone; He loves His Covenant People. God does not favor the Poor (as a class) over the Rich or over the Saints- we must not romanticize or idolize the Poor- some are saved, some are unsaved, some are righteous and some evil. The Law of God spells out Rights and Wrongs. Murder and Theft are murder and theft, etc. God is on the side of anyone who suffers Injustice- those who's Rights are denied. It is more Scriptural if we say God is on the side of those who suffer injustice, rather than on the side of the poor as such. Not all poor suffer injustice. Many rich people do. It is not valid to equate the Poor with the Oppressed (this is usually done using contemporary definitions of both words) More than 20 causes of Poverty are mentioned in Scripture. Injustice is a cause, but not always. Poverty may be caused by natural disaster. In December 2004, thousands were killed and millions became homeless because of a Tsunami in the Far East. They are now poor, but not because of Injustice. According to the Bible, poverty may also be caused by Disease, Death, War, Lifestyle Choices (Laziness, Addictions, Waste) and Ignorance. The Poor in Scripture are typically those who have lost their land (their livelihood) or their husbands (the sole Breadwinner in Bible times) or their parents. These are weak and the ones of whom the powerful take advantage. It is the weak and powerless who are the usual victims of oppression. If a natural disaster makes rich people homeless, most likely they will have the means and the connections to pursue their rights and will not be victimized. There are 10 basic root words in the Bible for oppression. There are 10 other related words. They are all used a total of 555 times and in 164 incidents they are connected with poverty or the Poor. There are many metaphors also associating oppression and poverty. Oppression is also often connected with Idolatry. Those who oppress the poor are typically rich, powerful idolaters. The words for "Oppression" or "Oppressed" are also variously translated as "violated, treated violently, subdued, crushed, killed, defrauded, deceived, cheated, exploited, stolen from, robbed" and treated with "scorn or contempt". Wherever, whenever, any of this happens, to anyone, it is evil and God opposes it. All such behavior transgresses His Law. It is unjust and God requires Justice. Many people, made poor and homeless by a natural disaster, will probably also become oppressed. Many of them will be denied their rights and treated unjustly. God hates that, and for that reason, will be on their side and work for their vindication. It is far more accurate, Biblically, to say that

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God is on the side of Justice, than to say God is on the side of the "Poor".

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:31

Tuesday, November 15, 2005

The Marks of a Healthy Church

Through recent years a number of books have appeared describing the marks of a healthy Church. One of these is by Mark Dever http://www.9marks.org/CC_Content_Page/0,,PTID314526|CHID616736|CIID,00.html will list Dever's marks and my short, simplistic summary of each

1. Expository Preaching - sermons that work through passages of Scripture, Book by Book, verse for verse, explaining and applying them
 2. Biblical Theology- teaching lots of Theology or Bible Doctrine, primarily in the sermons
 3. Biblical Understanding of the Good News- something along the line of the "Roman Road", emphasizing that people are lost in sin and need to be saved through the work of Christ alone
 4. Biblical Understanding of Conversion- such is a work of God, of Grace, upon hearing the Gospel and not primarily an emotional, subjective experience
 5. Biblical Understanding of Evangelism- calling sinners to repentance and saving faith
 6. Biblical Understanding of Membership- serious commitment to church life
 7. Biblical Church Discipline- serious effort to keep the church pure
 8. Promotion of Christian Discipleship and Growth- emphasis on growth in holiness
 9. Biblical Understanding of Leadership- plurality of strong Elders
- All of this sounds simply like the old fundamental Baptist Church in which I was ordained (only we called the Elders, Deacons). I no longer believe this is an adequate model.

Notice that Dever's traditional model is presented from a Pastor's and organizational perspective. There are several Models of the Church in the Bible. One of these Biblical models seems especially relevant today: The Church as the Body of Christ. The local congregation as such, the members being parts of the Body, is to visibly, physically be Christ in a local place, small town or neighborhood in a city. This organic, incarnational or sacramental model of the Church is missing altogether from Dever's approach. To those who say: "We would see Jesus" we should be able to say: "Look at our Church" And what would they see? A Congregation that is committed to serious and joyous worship A Congregation of people who are serious intercessors before the Throne of God A Congregation of people whose relationships are right, as measured by the life of Jesus A Congregation of people who resolutely live according to the Norms of God A Congregation which will pay the cost of being the Body of Christ in our society Seeing a congregation that has these "marks", people would see Jesus in their midst. Sadly, these are not the marks of any fundamental Baptist type church I know. Sadly, a church could have Dever's 9 Marks and not have these 5 Marks. The former does not necessarily result in the latter.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 10:01

Friday, November 11. 2005

Making Fun of Pat Robertson

It is easy to make fun of Pat Robertson because of his alledged prediction of God's judgment on a town in Pennsylvania for their ousting of a school board which approved the teaching of Intelligent Design. I did not hear Robertson's comment; but I suspect that what the newscasters were really ridiculing was the notion of Divine Judgement. Robertson has spoken of that on other occasions with the same result. (Unfortunately, his comments bring derision to the topic, as do the comments and antics of many Preachers bring reproach on Christ Himself. That does not change what is true) People should stop laughing. (Do not let Robertson or the response to him get us away from the subject.) There is a Day of Wrath coming. No teaching in the Bible is more clear and the Church has confessed its belief in that Day, with its Creeds, for centuries. This passage from Ezekiel was in Oremus this morning-Ezekiel 7:1-8: The word of the LORD came to me: thus says the Lord GOD An end! The end has come upon the four corners of the land. Now the end is upon you, I will let loose my anger upon you; I will judge you according to your ways, I will punish you for all your abominations. My eye will not spare you, I will have no pity. I will punish you for your ways, while your abominations are among you. Then you shall know that I am the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD: Disaster after disaster! See, it comes. Hmnn, disaster after disaster. Where have we been reading about them lately?

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 09:01

Tuesday, November 8, 2005

The Real Regulatory Principle

The Bible (especially in the Old testament) teaches that the Worship God expects and commands is- 1. The offering of sacrifice2. to the one true God3. with faith that He exists and rewards those who worship Him4. by worshippers whose lives are holy & righteousThe emphasis is on #4. Far more than Ritual, whatever it may. God looks on the heart and life of those who use it.

Psalm

24:3 who may ascend the hill of the Lord? who may stand in his holy place? who may worship? 4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. 5 He will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God his Savior. Without holiness or righteousness or obedience to His Law, whatever we do in a Worship Service is totally in vain. Worship without obedience is flat outright rejected by God. And in the New Testament, Worship is expected and important, but Jesus himself said that to love God and neighbor is more important than "correct" Worship.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 18:11

What Determines the Way We Should Worship?

In the on-going debate about Worship, I tried to illustrate in the previous two posts that there are at least two, very different "Models" for Worship in the Scripture. People can, and do, follow one or the other and claim that the one they follow is the Scriptural one. The question is: Are we bound to follow either or any "model" of corporate worship in the Bible? Perhaps, instead, there are principles to guide corporate worship. Yes, there are. We are not bound to either of the Models I have included here. Of course, that begs the question: what are those Biblical Principles? I offer for your consideration-

<http://www.chesapeakepresbytery.org/bco/?chapter=47>

The Reformed approach to Worship traditionally uses what is called the "Regulative Principle". In essence, specific worship practices must have Biblical precedent or support or they are not to be allowed. Some use this, for example, to authorize the non-instrumental singing of Psalms and the forbidding of singing hymns and songs from any other source and accompanied by, say, a keyboard. This is in contrast to what most evangelical Protestant Christians believe: We may do whatever we want in a Worship Service, [ideally they should add: if it does not contradict or deny sound Bible doctrine]

http://www.thirdmill.org/files/english/theology/87494~9_6_99_6-58-40_PM~TH.Pratt.Reg.Princ.pdf

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:44

Worship Services in the Early Church

First, evangelistic preaching with an invitation to respond by being baptized-36 ... let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has

made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified." 37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the

heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" 38 Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him." 40 And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." 41 So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. Second, a Communion Service for Believers, accompanied by a lot of fellowship and sharing-42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. 44 All who believed were together and had all things in common; 45 they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

and a lot of participation by people in the congregation, exercising charismatic gifts-18 I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you; 19 nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind, in order to instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue. 22 Tongues, then, are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is not for unbelievers but for believers. 23 If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your mind? 24 But if all prophesy, an unbeliever or outsider who enters is reprovved by all and called to account by all. 25 After the secrets of the unbeliever's heart are disclosed, that person will bow down before God and worship him, declaring, "God is really among you."

26 What should be done then, my friends? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. 27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn; and let one interpret. 28 But if there is no one to interpret, let them be silent in church and speak to themselves and to God. 29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. 30 If a revelation is made to someone else sitting nearby, let the first person be silent. 31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged. 32 And the spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets, 33 for God is a God not of disorder but of peace. Apparently, people were allowed, during the Service, to ask questions and discuss issues- except for the women- As in all the churches of the saints, 34 women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. 35 If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. 37 Anyone who claims to be a prophet, or to have spiritual powers, must acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord. 38 Anyone who does not recognize this is not to be recognized.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:24

Friday, October 21, 2005

Left Behind

The latest "Left Behind" movie is showing in thousands of churches across the land. It is seen as a great evangelistic "tool". I do not intend to see it. I have not read any of the books in the series. In my understanding of Scripture, the end times scenerio, in the books and moves based on them, is fiction. Fiction in itself is fine. I have a problem with it when it purports to be Bible Truth. The stories are based on an interpretation of Scripture called "Dispensationalism". The majority of Christians do not believe Dispensationalism is Biblical. The question is: How can something false be an effective "tool" for leading the unsaved to saving Truth? There is no question that seeing the movie will lead many to make a "decision for Christ". But, what value will that decision have, if it is not based on Truth? A good review of the movie can be found at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/movies/reviews/leftbehind3.html>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 10:19

Friday, October 7, 2005

More on Perfection

What I said in an earlier post today [below] can, and should be, nuanced. The "perfect" Christian is the Christian who is mature, but what is a mature Christian? We may well answer that a mature Christian is one who is solid in faith, grounded in the Bible with a good grasp of doctrine. We might further say that a mature Christian is one whose life is a good testimony, righteous, exhibiting character and virtue. All of that would be correct. The Apostle John emphasizes all of this, but adds something more: love. The verses we discussed earlier [below] mention perfect love, while our focus has been on a perfect person. What is the connection? And how do we become "perfect" (mature)? 1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. God is love. Love comes from Him to us, from His presence within us. He wants that love to be complete ["perfect"] in us. That happens, as we share the love He gives to us. The more we share God's love, the more complete or mature ("perfect") God's love in us becomes. John makes clear that sharing God's love means laying down our lives on behalf of others in very practical ways. (3:16-18) 16 So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 17 By this (our sharing God's love with others) is love perfected with us, ... (this means that) as he is so also are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. The thought moves from perfect love to a perfect person. The latter is defined and characterized by the presence of God's perfect love for others in his heart and life. The mature (perfect) Christian is the one in whom God's love is mature (perfect). The mark of a mature Christian is this love. If we have all the other attribute above, but have not love, we are nothing (1 Cor 13)

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 19:40

Perfection in this life? (Query following today's QT Thot)

Yes, that is what God commands and expects and enables. Of course, the definition of "perfection" is important. I defined it [please read carefully] in today's QT Thots as "complete and mature". The word in the relevant NT verses does not mean without flaw or error. God commands and expects us to become mature and not to remain "new born babes" all our lives.

<http://www.study-light.org/dic/hbd/view.cgi?number=T4914>The QT Thot text in 1 John 2 (and also chap 1 and 3) teaches us that all, including the "perfect", sin; but, do not sin. Contradiction? No. Again, read carefully: the verbs involved are aorist, indicating punctiliar, one time completed action versus present participles indicating continual, on-going action. A "perfect" Christian will indeed sin [defined in 3:4 as lawlessness] on occasion, but that will not be normative, on-going or habitual behavior. Thankfully, when we do commit an act of lawlessness [note: pastorally speaking, we must distinguish between what the Bible calls "sin" from what society, or more often, our parents, said was "sin" as we grew up], the blood of Christ avails upon our confession of that act (1:9)

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 12:29

Wednesday, October 5, 2005

Jewish Holidays

Jewish people are observing New Years this week. It is supposed to be a time for reflection of the year past and resolutions for the year ahead. Sounds like what Gentiles do on their New Years. But for religious Jewish people, there is the added component of guilt and contrition for the "sins" of the past year. This is in anticipation of the Day of Atonement observed next week. The "sacrifice" intended to atone for the "sins" are prayers and promises made on that Holy Day. As Christians, we believe, as Hebrew Scripture itself teaches, without shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness of sin. See Heb 9:22 That Blood is of the perfect Lamb of God, who is Jesus. Sadly, the prayers and promises made on the so-called Day of Atonement will not accomplish what they are intended to do.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 10:50

Thursday, September 15, 2005

Are "Property Rights" Biblical?

A responder commented on my post in which I said that the Bible teaches the right to private property. Actually, the Bible teaches that, in the absolute sense, all things belong to God. People do not have absolute possession of anything. Human beings, as His Image, are God's designated stewards of His property. Each "owner" is accountable to God, the Creator, for its use. Yes, this extends to farmers, corporations and businesses of all kinds, as well as the homeowner. All human beings have many rights. They originate in God Himself and belong to people exactly and only because He created them in His image, because we are human. The notion that Rights are created, given and taken away by government or popular vote is not what I have in view here. I'm talking here only about universal human rights. Such Rights are gifts from God, nothing we have earned or deserved. The "Fall" did not cancel out these Rights, however abused they may be because of our fallen nature. The most simple way to get a handle on what these God-given human rights are is to consider what the God-given universal human responsibilities are. These are summarized in the decalogue. That certainly was not abrogated by the Fall. The Ten Commandments stand as God's moral will for all people. I think you will agree. Well, universal human rights are the flip side of the Commandments. The reason people are responsible not to steal is because people have the right to keep their property. People have the responsibility not to murder because people have the right to live. People have the right to rest and re-creation because they have the responsibility to work. Because people accused of crime have the right to due process (an honest trial) people making the accusations have the responsibility to not bear false witness. Etc

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 16:27

Saturday, September 3, 2005

The Word prevailed! Yea!

I am well aware that our culture is visual. The media for the Message are pictures and stories. TV and Movies. The Matrix and Star Wars series, et al. And I am not forgetting music, either. Today's audiences are not supposed to be able to process long, linear, logical verbal presentations (traditional lectures and sermons) Forget debate, tell stories and live the life- be incarnational. Model the Message. So, as one who enjoys a good lecture, it is with delight that I read today's Scripture from Acts, about the Apostle Paul's ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19).

He entered the synagogue and for three months spoke out boldly, and argued persuasively about the kingdom of God.

When some stubbornly refused to believe and spoke evil of the Way before the congregation, he left them, taking the disciples with him, and argued daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This continued for two years, so that all

the residents of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the

word of the Lord. No movies. No music. No stories. No incarnational modeling. Just more than two years of bold, argumentation and reasoning. And God blessed it. Lives were changed, as sinners responded to Paul's arguments. The Holy Spirit used well reasoned lectures to convince, convict and convert. The word of the Lord prevailed. Sweet!

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 09:28

Monday, August 15, 2005

The 268 Generation

I just read about the 268 Generation, a fairly new movement among college students (annual Convention, website resources, music). The name comes from Isaiah 26:8 and it's motto is "A Passion for God's renown" taken from that text. They have a Declaration in which the students commit themselves to live for the glory of God, in their personal lives, churches and world missions. <http://www.268generation.com/enter.htm> They promote "the passionate pursuit of God and a desire to spread His glory throughout the earth!" Reading about the 268 Generation, I was encouraged; because I share this purpose. I looked more closely at their vision verse, Isaiah 26:8, as it's printed on their website-"Yes, Lord, walking in the way of your Truth, we eagerly wait for you, for your Name and your renown are the desire of our souls." This rendering expresses a wonderful purpose and I pray, indeed, that all students (all people) would confess this. However, one problem: the text doesn't actually say this. The word "Truth" should be "judgement". The phrase "walking in the way of your truth" should read "waiting in the way of [as in "the way of a coming hurricane"] your judgement". "Waiting for you", in context, is waiting for God to come in judgement upon the enemies of Israel. When He does that, His Name, His reputation, among the wicked will be remembered. And that was the "desire" of the original speaker. This more accurate rendering of the text is not what the 268 Generation has in mind. Their text says something good, but it is not faithful to the original. That is not good. (check out the ESV, NKJ, RSV, NAS) Some versions use Law instead of Judgement, but that does not fit the context (read chaps 24-27). No version uses the word "Truth" and none are about the subjective desire for a spiritual experience in a "worship" experience such as promoted by the 268 Generation at their Conventions. When we insist on the authority of the Scripture, we must also insist on as accurate and faithful translation and interpretation of it as possible. What good is the former apart from the latter? In this particular case, the 268 Generation misses what the text is really saying to us: the desire of the Christian's heart should be to see GOD [as revealed in Scripture] acknowledged by the masses of people who currently disavow Him. We are surrounded by multitudes who ridicule the very concept of such a God and reject Him completely. We are to pray that He will be recognized and honored by them. We recognise that to accomplish this will require God's acts of judgement upon both His People and on the nations. We pray for Him to bring it on. Do it, Lord. We are to so strongly desire to see God glorified, we will desire to see Him manifest His judgements on earth to that end. The 268 Generation misses all that. We must not.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 16:58

Wednesday, June 8, 2005

Who are the Poor?

There was an announcement in this morning's news that the city has arranged for a new location to be used as a shelter for the homeless in Springfield. There are many agencies and groups working in the area to help the poor and homeless. Most of them are secular, but some Christian groups and churches are active with ministries to the poor. They honestly believe they are doing what the Bible commands, because God loves the Poor. But, who are the Poor God loves. Once again, definitions are crucial.

God is for Justice. Absolutely. Anyone who really knows their Bible knows that God is all about Justice. "Justice" is all about Righteousness: God does what is right according to His character and standards. He ministers Justice to all, rich and poor, fairly without partiality- with equity. He does not favor one group or class of people over another. God expects all of His People to do likewise- to conform their behavior to His character and standards. Justice means acting according to the Law (the Word) of God. That is Justice. Every one has the right and responsibility to do this. Injustice is defined as depriving someone of their God-given rights and responsibilities. Pursuing Justice means securing and protecting those rights and responsibilities. Justice must not be redefined simply as "inclusion", ie-affirming and accepting all people; particularly people who have been "marginalized" in American Society (which often means "minorities", women, and the mentally ill; but, especially means people who are characterized by an attraction to other people of the same sex. Thus, some churches advertize with the code phrases: "We are open and affirming" "We believe in diversity") This is not the definition of Justice according to the Bible. Who are the Poor? More than 20 causes of Poverty are mentioned in Scripture, including Natural Disasters (like a Tsunami), Disease, Death, Lifestyle choices (laziness, addictions, waste) and Ignorance. All of these cause poverty. The word in Scripture most often associated with poverty is Oppression. Actually, there are 10 basic roots words translated "oppression" or "oppress" plus 10 other related words. They are used a total of 555 times and in 164 times are connected with poverty or the poor. There are also many metaphors associated with oppression and poverty. The major cause of Oppression is Idolatry: those who oppress others are typically rich and powerful idolators. The words that are translated oppress or oppression are also variously translated as violated, treated violently, crushed, killed, defrauded, cheated, exploited, robbed and treated with scorn or contempt. People with power and connections are not usually victims of oppression (unless they lose their power and connections) It is the weak and powerless who are oppressed. They are taken advantage of by people with power and means. The poor in Scripture are righteous, ie- the God-fearing faithful, who have lost their land (their livelihood) or their husbands (the Breadwinner) or their parents (caregivers). Thus, they have become weak, though death or disaster, and thus vulnerable to oppression. Of course it is possible that oppression could have caused the death or disaster in the first place. Poverty and Oppression seem to feed on each other and go round and round. At the very least, the Poor today, who would fit the Scriptural definition, would be Believers who are widowed, orphaned or unemployed, without the support or means necessary to get by, due to no fault of their own. The main source of their help, Scripturally, is God and their fellow believers and church family.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 09:34

Tuesday, May 24, 2005

Coming on Line: Basics for a new Believer #1

The most fundamental truth to master- You are in Christ & Christ is in you if you have put faith in Jesus as your Lord & Savior, ie- if you have made a conscious decision in which you said, "Forsaking All I Take Him to be my Lord & Savior [F.A.I.T.H.] Then- 1. God sees you "in Christ" This is your position, your standing, before God: accepted, adopted, righteous. 2. God places "Christ in you". The person of Christ comes to live his life within you. This is the Holy Spirit. Assurance of Salvation rests on #1 and the experience of salvation rests on #2 Christ is a person. To have Christ in you means that a real, living person is in you. You are indwelt by his spirit, literally. As a person, Christ has a mind, heart, will and character. He wants to think his thoughts, express his emotions, assert his values and manifest his traits through your mind, heart, will and character. This leads to conflict. A mature Christian is the one in whom Christ is dominant. He wins the conflict. See Gal 2:20; Rom 8:10; 2 Cor 13:5; Eph 3:17; Col 1:27

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:03