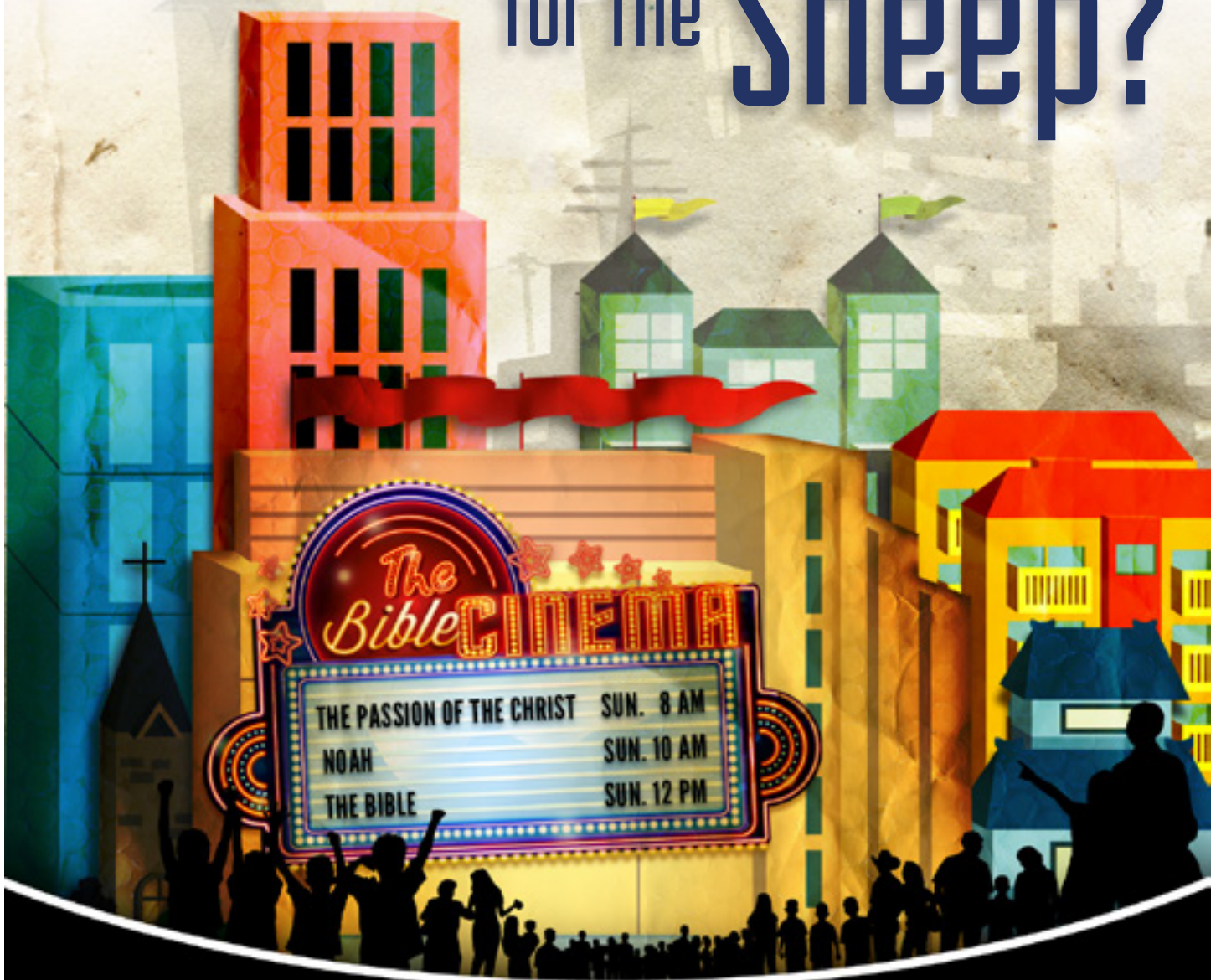


Showtime for the Sheep?



The
Berean
Call

JULY 2013

THE BIBLE ACCORDING TO HOLLYWOOD

by T.A. McMahon

NEW! THIS LITTLE CHURCH HAD NONE



This Little Church Had None

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Seven years after publication of the controversial ground-breaking bestseller *The Seduction of Christianity* in 1985, its authors, Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahon, joined forces on another front. TBC was formed under the direction of Dave Hunt for the purpose of encouraging spiritual discernment among those who regarded themselves not just as “evangelicals” but as *biblical* Christians. The primary vehicle for this endeavor was through the publication of the newsletter *The Berean Call*. The ministry and newsletter name is taken from Acts 17:11, in which the writer of Acts commended those in the synagogue of the Greek city of Berea for being more fair minded than those in Thessalonica—because not only were they eager to receive the Word, but the Bereans also checked it against what the Apostle Paul taught them in order to see if his teaching was according to the Scriptures. Through the publishing and multimedia efforts of The Berean Call (TBC) believers are exhorted to get back into the Word of God instead of being “carried about by every wind of doctrine,” and are equipped with materials to help them walk in the truth. TBC’s stated mission is to:

ALERT believers in Christ to unbiblical teachings and practices impacting the church

EXHORT believers to give greater heed to biblical discernment and truth regarding teachings and practices being currently promoted in the church

SUPPLY believers with teaching, information, and materials that will encourage the love of God’s truth, and assist in the development of biblical discernment

MOBILIZE believers in Christ to action in obedience to the scriptural command to “earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude 3)

IMPACT the church of Jesus Christ with the necessity for trusting the Scriptures as the only rule for faith, practice, and a life pleasing to God

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THE BEREAN CALL

"[The Bereans] . . . searched the scriptures daily, [to see] whether those things were so."—Acts 17:11

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The Bible According to Hollywood

T. A. McMahon

Hollywood has a long history of making Bible-based movies, including epics by Cecil B. DeMille and John Huston; Italian directors Pasolini, Rossellini, and Zeffirelli; American Martin Scorsese, and Australian Mel Gibson. Broadway musicals have also been made into "biblical" movies and videos such as *Jesus Christ, Superstar* and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Smaller productions abound including the Visual Bible's *Matthew*, *Acts*, and *The Gospel of John*, the TV presentation *Judas*, Campus Crusade's *The Jesus Project*, and Johnny Cash's *The Gospel Road*. Then there are upcoming movie epics with proven box-office stars. *Noah*, for example, features Russell Crowe and Anthony Hopkins, and there are other offerings planned by two major studios. Warner Bros. and 20th Century Fox are planning productions on the life of Moses, with Steven Spielberg being sought to direct one of them. Randall Wallace (*Braveheart*, *Secretariat*) will direct the upcoming film version of the *New York Times* bestseller *Heaven Is for Real* (see May 2011 feature article), which, although not a biblical story, claims to give the first-hand experiences of a young boy who visited heaven.

It seems that Hollywood has been attracted to the Bible more than ever, thanks in large part to the financial success of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*. The History Channel's recent 10-hour miniseries titled *The Bible* did nothing to dampen the ongoing enthusiasm as it broke viewer records, making it "the most-watched cable entertainment telecast of the year." It played to more than 13 million viewers. Many Christians might conclude that much of the interest from secular entertainment companies is reason to rejoice. Of course, that would prove to be a hasty conclusion, especially for those who would call themselves *biblical* Christians.

Let's start with a definition of true biblical Christians. They would be individuals who regard the Bible as God's direct communication to mankind. They believe that Peter's words were inspired of the Holy Spirit when he wrote, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). They believe that all the words were without error as they were given to and written down by

the writers of Scripture. Both Matthew and Luke proclaimed that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word...of God" (Luke 4:4; Matthew 4:4). Paul commended the Thessalonians for receiving the "word of God," which they had been taught, "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God" (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Jesus prayed to the Father that His disciples be set apart by God's "truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Luke writes to his friend Theophilus that he had "perfect understanding" in all that he wrote and that Theophilus could receive them with confidence: "That thou mightest know the *certainty* of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed" (Luke 1:1-4). The point of all those verses (and many more) is that they are a support for a biblical Christian who believes in the supernatural accuracy of the Scriptures.

For those who aren't on that page, let's reason together. There are three possibilities regarding the sources of information found in the Bible: 1) The words came directly from God; or 2) They came from men, that is, the words are based upon man's speculations, opinions, and guesses about God; or 3) The words in the Bible are a mixture of 1 and 2. Biblical accuracy would suffer greatly under possibilities 2 and 3 but not under 1, the belief that the Scriptures came directly from God.

God's claimed attributes of omnipotence and omniscience support His ability to produce a book that is without error—that is, if the claim is true. We believe that the claims of God in the Scriptures are indeed true and that they are supported by the amazingly detailed prophecies that constitute nearly 30 percent of the Bible (see *TBC* 11/01; 6/09; 7/09; Q&A 3/04, etc.). Prophecy is the astounding device that God uses to verify that He alone is God and that He alone knows the future. In numerous chapters of the Book of Isaiah, God declares His sovereignty, challenging the worshipers of the idols and false gods of the pagans to ask their gods to produce accurately fulfilled prophecies. They can't—although down through history there have been continual bogus attempts (fortune tellers, crystal ball gazers, wizards, astrologers, psychics, channelers, etc.) to prove that the God of the Bible has made a false claim regarding His uniqueness.

If the Bible is of any value to mankind whatsoever, it *must* be accurate. Those who have no problem with a bible that includes the speculations and opinions of men, even in part, are putting their faith in something

with contributions by fallen, finite people rather than the words of an infinite, righteous, and holy God.

Preferences for various Bible translations are issues of controversy among many Christians and are beyond the scope of this article, except in principle. In terms of scriptural accuracy, however, few would disagree that a *literal translation* would be the most objective and therefore the most accurate. Literal versions rely on prayerful biblical scholarship familiar with the most accurate data in translating the Hebrew and Greek words into English (for English Bibles). Furthermore, they are far less subjective, meaning they do not involve the personal biases of what men *think* a verse *should* say. The most popular Bibles today lean to the subjective. These would include *dynamic equivalent* versions, which feature the personal opinions of a translation committee as to what the sense of a verse is rather than a literal translation of the terms. More subjective yet are *paraphrase* versions—those that are based upon the ideas of an individual in declaring what a verse says and means. As one can clearly see, in the slide from a literal translation to a paraphrase version, the movement is from the *objective* to the personally *subjective*, and from God's words to man's suggestions, opinions, and guesses.

If you need an example of the kind of damage that the subjective departure from God's words has caused, you need only to read Psalm 1:1 in *The Message* (*How well God must like you—you don't hang out at Sin Saloon, you don't slink along Dead-End Road, you don't go to Smart-Mouth College*) to recognize that what Eugene Peterson wrote could never fit with the phrases, "Thus saith the Lord," and "The word of the Lord came to me," which occur thousands of times throughout the Bible. Those phrases would seem ludicrous when applied to *The Message*, which can only say, "Thus saith Eugene Peterson."

Considering the blasphemy ("blasphemy" meaning a distortion of the character of God and His Word) of *The Message*, one might think that's as bad as it could get in terms of inaccurate Bible versions. Yes and no. It may be the worst thus far (it's used by more than 10 million evangelicals), but in terms of overall adverse influence, no written version's effects can compare to the damage done to the Bible when its content is translated to the silver screen or television. Those numbers of viewers are incalculable,

and the effect has been devastating beyond measure. Hopefully, most who are reading this are getting the picture (pun intended). If not, I recommend *Showtime for the Sheep?* (see resource pages), which gives many more reasons why much harm is done when attempting to translate the Bible visually. This brief article will focus primarily on the necessity of biblical accuracy.

QUESTION: *How does a biblical movie satisfy the necessity of biblical accuracy?*

ANSWER: It doesn't, and it can't—and the reasons are many. Here's a short list:

- 1) A movie takes what God has directly communicated in the Scriptures and makes the visual translation of what He said dependent upon what is in the minds and the craft of a film production crew (writers, director, cameramen, art director, actors, and a host of others).
- 2) Other constraints that determine what shows up on the screen have to do with budget, locations, weather, and the inevitable "Murphy's law" of filmmaking, which states, "If anything can go wrong, it will." Those are hardly "let's be true to the Scriptures" considerations.
- 3) Any movie must begin with a screenplay. The Bible cannot be translated into a biblically accurate movie because nearly all movies need dialogue, which the Bible provides only in limited situations. Hence, the screenwriter (whether he is a believer or not) has to supply the dialogue to maintain story continuity, which means that he must add to the Scriptures, thus including false information. "Adding to the Scriptures" is forbidden by God's Word (Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18-19). A few such productions try to avoid some of the translation problems by incorporating only those words that are found in a particular Bible version. This is greatly misleading because it gives the false impression that the production is more accurate. More accurate than what? A movie is, first and foremost, a visual medium. When a person exits a theater after watching a powerful movie, I can almost guarantee that it will be the images that he will leave with, not the words.
- 4) "Biblical" movies are an assemblage of false images and scenes. Not one frame is accurate. Yet *The Passion of the Christ* was lauded by many highly regarded evangelical leaders as "the most accurate biblical movie yet." Yet?—as if the film medium were capable of a progressive movement toward truth? No! Suppose that I were to watch a video by someone who claims that he has produced a documentary featuring my family. After watching the video, I tell him that he has gotten a few things right but that everything else is wrong: yes, my wife's name is Peggy; no, she doesn't weigh 300 pounds. Yes, I have five children; no, they are not all girls. Yes,

my kids are excellent athletes; no, they are not on the synchronized swimming team.

I've been told all too often that my concern for accuracy misses the fact that God can "use" these movies. Some have said, "Admittedly there are problems, but...but...the Lord can use a movie to get people interested in reading the Bible," which, by the way, was a stated goal of the History Channel's *The Bible*. Should I likewise conclude that the inaccurate documentary of "my family" might get some people interested in knowing my real family? Would they be disappointed that my kids are all very good runners but that my three sons are not huge fans of the "sport" of synchronized swimming? What happens when the multimillions who might be motivated to read the Bible because of all the Hollywood drama, effects, dialogue, and compelling music realize that it's not in the "book version"?

A similar situation occurred when the *Bibleman* (a character playing off the popularity of super heroes Batman, Superman, Spiderman, Iron Man, etc.) video series and tour, through the "wisdom" of marketing, attempted to get pre-teens excited to read the Bible. They found that if the kids even bothered to look at the Bible at all, they were disappointed at not finding the fleshly excitement in the written Word that they had loved in the video.

- 5) There are many more aspects unique to the medium of film that work against the translation of the Bible into that means of communication. Through this art form, one is attempting to convince the audience that what they are seeing is believable. Shooting a scene in the place where the actual biblical event took place may help its accuracy, but often, if that location doesn't quite satisfy what the film director believes an audience will accept, then it's "on to a more 'believable' location." For example, *The Passion of the Christ*, featuring Christ's crucifixion in Israel, was shot mostly in Italy.
- 6) This point may be the most serious error. Those who have played the character of Jesus in Bible-based movies from the last century on have all portrayed false Christs. Many spoke words that Jesus never spoke and misrepresented the character of the biblical Jesus. In a made-for-TV movie, as one example, Judas questions the Jesus character regarding his actions in clearing the moneychangers out of the Temple. Jesus' reply was that he blew it. This is a misrepresentation of the perfect, sinless God/Man. Yet, tragically, that—along with all the other misrepresentations of Jesus—are the only representations that millions upon millions around the world may ever see or hear about the One who came to save them from their sins.
- 7) Finally, the problem isn't only for the lost worldwide, but it is also a stumbling block

for many evangelical Christians, even those with a reasonable amount of biblical discernment. I spoke at a conference about a year after *The Passion of the Christ* had its theatrical release. As I sat chatting with a group of young adult believers, Mel Gibson's movie somehow became the topic of our conversation. I listened, somewhat uncomfortably, to their glowing praises of the film and wondered how I might make an important point without seeming to be "preaching" to them. Then the thought came to me, *Why not give these somewhat biblically literate Christians a Bible quiz of sorts?* Having seen the movie a couple of times and written a book on the subject, it was easy for me to describe eight scenes in detail. The quiz part was, "Tell me which of the scenes are found in the Bible and which are not." The consensus of the group was that five were biblical and three were not. To their shock, they only got three correct; all eight were either from Mel Gibson's movie-making mind or the mystical nun's book (*The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*) to which Gibson had looked for more content in creating his script. I have great concern for our upcoming visual generation.

Ignorance of the visual medium with regard to so-called biblical productions is a serious problem among evangelicals of all generations. Without the support of evangelicals, whose churches bought out theatres so that their sheep and guests could view the film, Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* would have been a box-office flop. In *Showtime for the Sheep?*, I could have filled nine pages with endorsements from evangelical leaders for this production that Gibson described to *Christianity Today* as "his very Marian movie."

Yet the lack of discernment continues to abound. Here is a list of some of the advisors/endorsers for the History Channel's *The Bible*, most of whom were thrilled with the series' "biblical accuracy" or "bringing the Bible to life": Rick Warren, Joel Osteen, Nicky Gumbel, Luis Palau, Tony Campolo, Erwin McManis, T. D. Jakes, Leith Anderson of the National Association of Evangelicals, and Jim Daly of Focus on the Family (details of their endorsements, as well as more endorsers can be found at <http://www.outreach.com/the-bible/about.aspx>).

As overwhelming as this lack of discernment may seem in the church today, it has only just begun as Hollywood continues with its mistranslation of the Bible for Christians. Pray that the Lord's people will take to heart His words of warning: "Take heed that no man deceive you." Only the habit of daily reading God's Word and living it out will equip us with the discernment necessary to avoid being deceived.

Quotable

“Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men” (Mark 8:33). What was it that so roused our Lord? The very snare to which we are all so exposed: the desire of saving self; the preference of an easy path to the cross. Is it not true that we naturally like to escape trial, shame, and rejection; that we shrink from the suffering which doing God’s will, in such a world as this, must ever entail; that we prefer to have a quiet, respectable path in the earth—in short, the best of both worlds? How easily one may be ensnared into this! Peter could not understand why the Messiah should go through all this path of sorrow. Had we been there, we might have said or thought yet worse. Peter’s remonstrance was not without strong human affection. He heartily loved the Savior too. But, unknown to himself, there was the unjudged spirit of the world.

—William Kelly,
quoted in William MacDonald’s,
The Believer’s Bible Commentary

Q&A

QUESTION: It’s a shame that if I accept a mid-tribulation (pre-wrath) position, I’m said to have accepted a heretical position and my fundamentalist Baptist brethren will separate from me....I think the pre-trib [supporters] have pulled scriptures out of context to stitch their position together....If the Rapture is a secret event that is imminent, why would God say to “watch”? We must be looking for more than the signs and seasons.

RESPONSE: Our position should never be based upon who is for or against a teaching. The Scriptures instruct us to “rightly [divide] the word of truth” (2 Tm 2:15). We know that each verse must be understood in its place and in harmony with the rest of Scripture. As we labor toward that end, we will become “fully persuaded in [our] own mind” (Rom 14:5).

Being fully persuaded—there is where we must stand. Consequently, whether or not your IFB brothers will separate from you is not by itself proof for the truth or error of what you believe. *What do the Scriptures say?* The believer in a pre-wrath or post-trib position will certainly not argue with the Lord on the way up: “Wait, wait, this isn’t how I understood the Scriptures!”

In truth, many of those abandoning the pre-trib position are also abandoning premillennialism entirely, choosing instead such positions as preterism, amillennialism, or post-millennialism. From there, the

declension spreads to replacement theology and, in extreme cases, anti-Semitism.

Why would God tell us to “watch”? The Scriptures from the beginning to the end enjoin the Lord’s people to watchfulness. Jesus admonishes His followers: “If the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up” (Mt 24:43). Mark 13 parallels Matthew 24 and concludes with Jesus saying, “Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch” (Mk 13:35-37). There is a purifying effect that is understood in the doctrine of the pre-trib Rapture. Christ could return *at any time!* “When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure (1 Jn 3:2-3). It’s safe to conclude that the Lord desires us to be watching, regardless of what our personal theology may be.

Finally, we need to stand in the light that God has given us in the Bible. That is why the Lord urges a frequent and diligent reading of and meditating upon Scripture. Part of the controversy generated by eschatology is due to the fact that certain things haven’t happened yet. Ultimately, what will happen will be the will of the Lord, regardless of our view or understanding. Further, the book of Revelation does contain both figurative and literal things. No wonder the Lord told us to “rightly divide” (or put each piece in its proper place) “the word of truth” (2 Tm 2:15).

QUESTION: I never quite understood your objection to Calvinism [but] in the last year I have been beaten up pretty badly by many covenant theology [another aspect of Reformed doctrine] people and have begun to reflect on the question of whether their doctrine is somehow toxic and produces that antagonism, or if people with toxic personalities are attracted to the doctrine. I am coming to the conclusion that the covenant doctrine places an emphasis on the Christian (both individually and collectively) that elevates our works such that the Spirit is quenched and the flesh is elevated. I see this producing the works of the flesh listed in Galatians. I see this path (Galatians) as leading to the destination defined by the Pharisees. I would be interested if you could share with me your views on this subject.

RESPONSE: Our objections to Calvinism are primarily biblical, but we have experienced reactions that were hardly Christian from many Calvinists to articles that we have

written and books by Dave Hunt on the subject. Such hostile responses have not gone unnoticed by Calvinists themselves. A number of commentators have spoken of the “intellectual” appeal (i.e. “pride”) that is too often seen in prominent Calvinists. Calvinism, according to one promoter of Reformed teaching, draws followers “Because it possesses an intellectual appeal and spiritual depth over-against a reigning Christian anti-intellectualism and general evangelical superficiality” (<http://modernmarch.com/2011/05/13/david-naugle-on-the-appeal-of-calvinism-to-the-younger-generation/>).

Calvinist John Piper wrote, “The intellectual appeal of the system of Calvinism draws a certain kind of intellectual person, and that type of person doesn’t tend to be the most warm, fuzzy, and tender. Therefore this type of person has a greater danger of being hostile, gruff, abrupt, insensitive or intellectualistic....It’s a sad and terrible thing that that’s the case. Some of this type aren’t even Christians, I think. You can embrace a system of theology and not even be born again” (Piper, “Why Are Calvinists So Negative?”, Desiring God Blog, 5/21/2008).

Another Calvinist, Greg Dutcher, states, “I love the doctrines of grace with all my heart, and I think they are pride-shattering, humbling, and love-producing doctrines. But I think there is an attractiveness about them to some people, in large matter, because of their intellectual rigor. They are powerfully coherent doctrines, and certain kinds of minds are drawn to that. And those kinds of minds tend to be argumentative.” (*Killing Calvinism: How to Destroy a Perfectly Good Theology from the Inside* [Cruciform Press, June 2012], p. 88)

It’s too easy to become infatuated with an “ism” rather than drawing closer to Christ through His Word. The Apostle Paul reminds us that the Lord, “also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (2 Cor 3:6). He isn’t speaking of the Old Testament law but is saying that it’s possible to preach the New Testament truth in a spiritless manner that will ultimately bring death to the hearers.

It has been said, “Don’t ask the Lord to use you. Rather ask Him to make you usable.” He doesn’t waste His efforts. If the Lord instructs us to minister with “meekness” (2 Tm 2:24-26), we must do so, believing that He will perhaps change those ministered to, and if not, we will have been faithful to the Word. Do we believe Him or do we reach for the rod out of human habit and in disobedience to the Word of God?

“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another” (Rom 14:19). We can’t possibly hope to edify sheep that have been taught by experience to run from us.



IN DEFENSE *of the* FAITH

BIBLICAL ANSWERS to CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

Must I Believe God Exists Before I Seek Him?

QUESTION: In my daily Bible reading, I came across a verse that really puzzles me: “Without faith it is impossible to please him [God]; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). Rather than God revealing Himself to a seeking heart, it sounds as though one must already believe in God before seeking Him. How can that be the case?

RESPONSE: Would someone seek God if he didn’t already believe He existed? It would be a waste of time. In fact, everyone, including you, knows that God exists.

The true story is told of a London street preacher who announced to his audience that every atheist was a fool because the Bible said so. A well-known atheist in the crowd shouted back at him that it was a slanderous insult, which he took personally, and that he would sue the preacher for damages. The preacher responded, “It’s not slander to tell the truth.”

The atheist countered, “And it’s not truth unless you can prove it! You’ll have to prove in court that I’m a fool, or I’ll take every pound you’ve got!”

“I don’t have to go to court to prove it,” said the preacher calmly. “You say you’re an atheist?”

“Yes, and not just a casual one. I’ve spent my life proving God doesn’t exist. It’s a pernicious myth!”

“Spent your life proving God doesn’t exist, have you?” replied the preacher. “Tell me this: if a man who spends his life fighting against something that doesn’t exist isn’t a fool, who is?”

Likewise, one would have to be a fool to spend any time at all seeking to know a God without being convinced that He exists. God expects every person, as the first step in knowing Him, to admit the obvious fact that He exists. Furthermore, God expects each person coming to Him to have a proper concept of who He is. He won’t honor prayers to an idol or to some “force” or “higher power.” Each person is accountable on the basis of the evidence to come to a proper understanding of God and not to be seeking some false god. God also requires that those who come to Him truly believe that He is not a God of caprice or trickery but a God who “rewards those who diligently seek Him.”

What is it that any sincere seeker should already have concluded about the God he wants to know? Reason and evidence dictate the following: To create the universe, God must be all-powerful (omnipotent) and all-knowing (omniscient) and in touch with every part of the universe at once (omnipresent). He would have to be at least as personal a Being as we are in order to create us. He would need to perfectly embody all that we recognize as the highest qualities to which mankind could aspire—love, truth, justice, patience, kindness, compassion, etc.—or there would be no explanation for our admiration of such attributes. Furthermore, He would have to know the future consequences of every action in His universe. Otherwise, He could make some terrible blunders. And of course He must have existed eternally as God. He certainly couldn’t have evolved or developed out of something or someone that was less than God.

The true God must also be able to create everything out of *nothing* and not just build or manufacture His universe out of materials already available. Not energy, not matter, not gravity or electricity, but *God alone* must be self-existent in order to be the cause of all. Finally, He must be perfectly good and just, or there would be no explanation for the common recognition of right and wrong written in the conscience of all mankind all over this earth. These are the minimum qualifications of the true God, without which we couldn’t trust and worship and love Him.

Although we can understand the necessity of the above abilities, it is also completely beyond our capacity to comprehend such a Being: a God who has *always* existed and thus is without beginning or end; who not only created everything out of nothing but in order not to lose control of His creation must know where every subatomic particle in every atom ever was or ever will be; who must also know what every person who ever lived or ever will live has ever thought or ever will think or say or do, etc. Obviously, such a God is beyond our ability to fully comprehend.

At the same time that God is beyond our comprehension, however, we have seen that both reason and evidence demand such a God as the only explanation for our own existence and that of the universe around us. To deny this God, though He is incomprehensible, would fly in the face of reason and common sense. It is both impossible and unreasonable for there to have been a time when nothing existed and to have everything, including God, somehow arise out of that void of nothingness. It is totally unreasonable to suggest that life and intelligence sprang unaided from dead, empty space and thereafter evolved by chance.

Having come to these conclusions about God on the basis of the evidence all around him and in his own conscience, the seeker is now in a position to cry out to this true God to reveal Himself. The precise steps and circumstances and inner convictions through which God will reveal Himself vary with each individual. It is through His Word, however, that the fullest and clearest revelation of God comes. And in this Word, God has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, who declared, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). Jesus also said, “No man cometh unto the Father but by me” (John 14:6). Whoever wants to know God must get to know Jesus. He is revealed in God’s Word, and He reveals Himself to those who open their hearts to Him. As He said, “Behold, I stand at the door [of every human heart] and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him” (Revelation 3:20).

TBC NewsWatch

IS ROMANS 1 ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY?

SERVANTSOFGRACE.ORG, 5/29/13, "IS ROMANS 1 ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY?" [EXCERPTS]: "Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves....For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error."

Pretty clear, eh? "Not so," say some advocates of homosexuality. They argue that Paul is not talking about homosexuality in these passages. The mention of homosexuality in this case is a reference to that which accompanied idolatrous worship. Often those making these arguments make it a point to read Romans 1 in the context. If we do, they say, we will clearly see that Paul's concern is with idolatry and not with homosexuality.

And you know what? They have a point...[Paul's] point in 1:18-23 is that God created mankind to worship and serve Him....We have "exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator."

Paul's point is that creation was not formed to worship creation. We are not made to worship and serve the like. Idolatry does just this, it makes us worship things that are creaturely, just like ourselves. God designed us to worship that which is outside ourselves. Idolatry causes us to essentially worship a mirror.

So those who teach that this passage is not fundamentally about condemning homosexuality are correct. Paul's main point is not about homosexuality. It is about the consequences of idolatry. But that doesn't mean that it has nothing to say about homosexuality.

He uses homosexuality because it is a fitting illustration for idolatry. In answering this question, Tom Schreiner says, "Probably because it functions as the best illustration of that which is unnatural in the sexual sphere." In other words, Paul focuses on homosexuality because it is a tremendous illustration of his point.

Homosexuality is the natural progression of idolatry. It is a picture of our idolatrous exchange of worshipping the Other and choosing to worship that which looks just like us. When we've bought the lie that creature is more important than the Creator, such a view is the result. Homosexuality is the natural progression of thinking that is unnatural.

(<http://servantsofgrace.org/2013/05/29/is-romans-1-about-homosexuality/>)

HOW A SCIENTIFIC FIELD CAN COLLAPSE

EVOLUTION NEWS AND VIEWS, 5/8/13, "HOW A SCIENTIFIC FIELD CAN COLLAPSE: THE CASE OF PSYCHIATRY" [EXCERPTS]: Psychology has long struggled to be considered scientific, given the checkered history of its eccentric pioneers, like Freud and Jung. Each of the contradictory theories emerging from psychology has struggled to do better at prediction or explanation than the "folk psychology" ordinary people use to gauge the motivations and behaviors of their fellow human beings. And the recent cases of outright fraud among some of social psychology's leading lights (examples in the *New York Times* and *Nature*) have made the field suspect, some would say a laughingstock as science.

Psychiatry, though, was supposed to be better. Its practitioners had to earn an MD. It had a widely accepted, peer-reviewed guidebook, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*, published by its professional society, the American Psychiatric Association. With its focus on observable symptoms, presumably rooted in biology, it had all the trappings of science. The things being said about psychiatry now, though, on the eve of publication of its latest upgrade, the *DSM-5*, are revealing it to be a science in crisis—if it ever was a science at all.

DSM-5, [which came] out on May 22, is the latest edition of the official diagnostic "bible" for psychiatrists that had its genesis in 1952. *DSM-5* removes some diagnoses, like Asperger's syndrome, reclassifies others, and adds a number of new conditions that are, to most of us, just weird: like "Skin Picking Disorder," "Sluggish Cognitive Tempo," and "Compulsive Hoarding." What about the new "Hypersexual Disorder"? Are psychiatrists just giving excuses for irresponsible behavior? Is psychiatry "cutting nature at its joints" or just manufacturing artificial pigeonholes?

According to Nick Craddock, professor of psychiatry at Cardiff University, also writing for *New Scientist* [says], "Not

since Freud's pseudoscientific theories early last century has psychiatry claimed any broad theoretical basis for making sense of our normal and abnormal feelings, thinking and social behaviours—the complexities at the heart of being human." In other words, psychiatry never made it to scientific status in the first place. Its claims remain "atheoretical," he believes, even though he is optimistic its day will come.

David Dobbs's review in *Nature* of Gary Greenberg's new book, *The Book of Woe: The DSM and the Unmaking of Psychiatry*, is the most devastating critique of psychiatry as a science. Dobbs writes under the headline: "Psychiatry: a very sad story." He notes that a century ago, psychiatrists considered "masturbatory insanity" and "wedding night psychosis" as mental illnesses. That those categories were dropped and new ones added in the interim suggests psychiatry lacks scientific footing, and instead evolves according to cultural norms. Yet the APA vigorously defends *DSM-5*, partly because it relies on sales for revenue. Greenberg is not just an outsider. He participated in a clinical trial. "The process proved so convoluted that he wanted to apologize to one patient for the 'inadequacy, the pointlessness, the sheer idiocy of the exercise,'" Dobbs writes.

(http://www.evolutionnews.org/2013/05/how_a_scientifi071931.html)

IRAN HAULS OFF CHRISTIAN PASTOR, SHUTS CHURCH

FOXNEWS.COM, 5/28/13, "IRAN HAULS OFF CHRISTIAN PASTOR, SHUTS DOWN CHURCH IN NEW SWEEP" [EXCERPTS]: Government agents shut down Iran's largest Persian-language Pentecostal church Monday, just one week after one of its pastors was arrested and hauled away midway through a worship service.

"These incidents appear to be an attempt to stop worship services from being conducted in Farsi, the language of the majority of Iranians," [the AOG general superintendent said.] "Services are allowed in Armenian, a minority language that most Iranians do not speak or even understand."

Christian groups fear a further erosion of what little tolerance of religious diversity has existed in Iran. Some estimates place the number of Iranian Christians, many of them converts from Islam, at about 100,000, in a nation of 75 million.

(<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/05/28/new-christian-pastor-detained-church-closed-in-iran/>)

T. A.'s Speaking Schedule

Aug 23-24 **TBC Conference**
Bend, OR
(800) 937-6638

Sep 4 **Candlelight Christian Fellowship**
Coeur d'Alene, ID
(208) 772-7755

STS 24/7 Broadcast Schedule

July 5 **Carl Kerby**
Reasons for Hope

July 12, 19, 26, Aug 2 **Paul Wilkinson**
Christian Palestinianism

Listen to Search the Scriptures 24/7 at:
www.theberean.org/radio
(Schedule is subject to change.)

Letters

Dear Sirs,

I'm sending just a quick note to express my gratitude at finding a ministry such as yours. I have been listening to your archived radio broadcast for the last six or seven months on oneplace.com. I love Dave Hunt's solid biblical teaching and have found even some of my obscure questions being answered on your program. Thank you so much. God bless your whole staff. Praise God! PB (ME)

TBC Staff,

Thank you so very much for the transcript of Dave Hunt's legacy [*Search the Scriptures* 24/7 broadcast with T. A. McMahon and Rob Yardley] (see page 16 to order).

My wife and I devoured Dave's books and teachings. Like many people, we learned so much from him. We knew he was human so we never put him on a pedestal. The fact that he forever encouraged his audience to be as the Bereans was proof that Dave didn't want to be revered. But I cannot think of any Christian writer or broadcaster I ever respected more. I have respected some, *perhaps*, as much but never anyone more.

As a former Catholic, and also a member of the Armstrong cult (with my wife; for about twenty years), Dave helped us to see things truly biblically and logically. God used him greatly to deliver us—and countless thousands, if not millions, of others—from spiritual strongholds and bondages. I can recall heeding for a while Calvinist dogma and doctrines and being so depressed and disturbed by them. That was until I read Dave's teachings on Calvinism. I am so grateful for

the relief those teachings brought me and for the true understanding of God's Grace.

To listen to Dave and Tom was like sitting next to them as close friends. I'm sure that had much to do with the Holy Spirit and the fact that the teachings were pure and sound. It was where we found teaching we didn't get elsewhere. (That's not to say we are not grateful for other excellent teachers we have discovered since. We are.)

I am certain that there will be many Christians—like Dave's family, Tom, other close friends, and those at The Berean Call who knew Dave personally—who are sad at Dave's leaving us but are glad too that he is with the Lord. I'm sure that many of them are looking forward to meeting him at the Rapture or, if they die prior to it, at the Resurrection. I know my wife and I do.

I do not thank God enough for the teachings of Dave Hunt and *The Berean Call*. God grant you all the grace to continue with the teaching of the sound doctrines God wishes us to know. Please continue with the great work that you do. MH (email)

Dear Mr. McMahon,

Although I have not read *Showtime for the Sheep?* I ask you not to throw the baby out with the bathwater.

I went to see *The Passion of the Christ*, and am not defending the movie nor Mel Gibson, but God.

God can use any means He chooses to speak to people—he used a jackass, so he can use Mel Gibson.

As I watched the movie I was consumed with the magnitude of my sin. Although I had thought I was a Christian for many years, as I watched the movie, I realized I was not. Through my sobs, all I could say within my spirit was "My God, what have I done?" I left the theater a changed person, and at 71 I am more in love with my LORD than I ever thought possible.

All I can say now is that once I was blind, but now I see. God meets us where we are—movie theater, church, bar.... He meets us where we are! AW (email)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Please be bountifully blessed for your commitment to share the truth with us all.

I have just read two of Dave Hunt's Classic Series and have been strongly motivated to remain faithful to the Word. Please never waver in your willingness to proclaim the truth. Abundant and rich blessings to you all! JM (Australia)

Dear Tom,

Thank you so much for your [radio] segments on the mini-series *The Bible*. I did not watch the series, but saw some of an interview with Roma Downey and her

husband. The interview made me uncomfortable so I decided against watching the mini-series.

Our pastor recently asked during a Wednesday night meeting what we thought about showing the series to the entire church. Almost all of the people in attendance thought this would be a good idea. I felt uneasy with this decision, but not having seen the mini-series, I was worried about how to privately voice my concerns with the pastor.

Your discussions have been such a blessing and now I feel much more at peace about being able to voice my concerns privately to our pastor.

Thank you for listening to and following our Lord and Saviour. I pray that the Lord will continue to bless, keep, and enlarge your ministry. JF (email)

TBC Notes

TBC's August Conference

We are very excited about this year's conference. Veteran attendees of our many past conferences have said they were all great but that last year's event was the best ever. By God's grace, we hope to go one better in August regarding that compliment. The lineup of speakers includes Carl Kerby (creation), Mark Cahill (evangelism), Paul Wilkinson (Israel), Dave James (hermeneutics), Keith Gibson (discernment), and yours truly (apologetics). The topics will major on the Bible and the critical importance of really knowing it in order to live our lives for Jesus. It is both the primary antidote and best prevention source regarding the growing seduction of the apostasy.

During the month of August, Bend, Oregon, is at its best, weather-wise—and to further interest you, let me add that Bend is regarded as the recreation capital of the Northwest, making your visit to the area a great time not only to attend our conference but to enjoy a little vacation as a bonus! If the Lord puts it on your heart to attend, we're confident that you will experience our best conference yet.

The dates are Friday and Saturday, August 23-24. There is no charge, but you must register on line or by calling 800-937-6638.

T. A. McMAHON
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

QUESTIONS FOR DAVID JAMES

DAVID JAMES, AUTHOR OF *THE HARBINGER: FACT OR FICTION?*,
WAS ASKED THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS [EXCERPTS]:

I read Jonathan Cahn's book The Harbinger last year and gave it to my pastor to read. He read it but was very skeptical. He gave me your book, The Harbinger: Fact or Fiction? I have a couple of questions. First, you were talking about false teachers, and it seemed like you lumped Benny Hinn and Joyce Meyer into that category. Is that true? Second, you refer to the Old Testament passage in 2 Chronicles 7:14: "If my children will humble themselves..." as not being applicable to today's people but only for Israel. If we are not to apply that somehow to today, how can we apply any scriptures for today? For instance, Jesus was speaking to the church at Laodicea when He said that they were lukewarm. Are we not to apply that to ourselves in this generation either?

DAVID JAMES RESPONDS [EDITED FOR LENGTH]:

THANK YOU so much for your thoughtful email. I'm glad that you were able to see that there really is another side to the story presented by Jonathan Cahn in *The Harbinger*.

1. Concerning Benny Hinn and Joyce Meyer: There are ways in which I can see that they are very different and there are ways in which they are similar. The most significant difference would be that Benny Hinn is far more radical in the way that he applies what he believes—and to be honest, I believe that in many ways he is an intentional deceiver. On the other hand, I don't know that Joyce Meyer is intentionally deceiving people, nor have I heard her make the false prophecies made by him. I should have been a bit more clear about my reason for connecting them.

Theologically, Joyce Meyer has a long history with the Word Faith movement, which is filled with false teachers and some of the most extreme examples of heresy, from the holy laughter of Rodney Howard Browne (which is essentially identical to the Kundalini spirit of Hinduism), to Jesus' "descent into hell" to pay for our sins, to false healings, among other errors. The following site has some important information that I think will help explain some of the concerns with Joyce Meyer: <http://carm.org/joyce-meyer>. Lately she appears to have become more focused on self-esteem/self-worth teaching and isn't talking as much about the other things, but these are problematic from a biblical standpoint as well.

2. Concerning the passage in 2 Chronicles 7:14, there are a number of things that need to be kept in mind when studying the Scriptures. First, there is the technical interpretation, of which there is essentially only one for any given passage. Then there is the practical application. In my book I presented the problem with that passage when it is applied to America. First, "my people" always refers to Israel in the Old Testament—and the Lord is specifically talking about His special covenant relationship with Israel as a nation that is unique and cannot be applied to any other nation. This means that the passage cannot be applied to America as a nation in any sense.

However, behind this passage is a principle that *can* be applied (and one that is seen throughout the Scriptures) for individuals who have a personal relationship with the Lord—and it is that God will bless them as *individuals*. Of course, if a nation were to be filled with people who have a personal relationship with the Lord, then the blessings that those individuals experience would have a cumulative effect and thus a relative blessing on the nation.

However, Jesus said, "Narrow is the way, and few there be that find it," which means that it's unlikely that any nation will ever be made up primarily or even largely of born-again believers in Christ. So the generic call for America to repent as a nation will never, ever be answered because, according to Christ's own words, most unbelievers will not repent—and

the majority of the nation will always be unbelievers. Beyond that, *The Harbinger* doesn't even give a clear gospel message, nor does it explain what this repentance for which it is calling looks like.

Let me give another example that might make this clearer: Romans 4:3, Galatians 3:6, and James 2:23 all tell us that Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. We know that Abraham was called by God, who made specific promises to him. We can't apply those promises directly to ourselves because that would mean that everyone who believed God as did Abraham would not *only* have it counted to him as righteousness but that everyone would also be the progenitor of many kings and nations—and we know this won't happen because the promise in this *technical* sense isn't to anyone but Abraham. However, the *application* of the part of the OT concerning Abraham is that just as he believed God and was therefore counted as righteous, so, too, is everyone in every generation who believes and turns to the Lord. So, we just need to sort out the intent of the passages and find the timeless principles that are applicable in every generation to every person.

Going back to 2 Chronicles, whoever humbles himself before God will find himself in a place of blessing, but if it is a farmer, for example, and his land is going through a drought, we can't apply the OT passage to say that seeking God's face will cause the drought to end for that farmer—or even for 10 or 100 farmers who do the same thing. It *might* be that God would do that in answer to prayer, but in the case of ancient Israel (being the people of God), this would have been a *guarantee* that it would happen for the nation because of their covenant relationship with God, and this promise of blessing was in connection with the covenant. America has no such covenant relationship with God—and cannot have, because Israel is unique in this regard.

3. Concerning the church being "lukewarm," Jesus was speaking to the church of Laodicea, the last of the seven churches in Revelation 3. Yes, of course we can apply this at the level that the Lord intended it—but we need to understand the specific context. In this case, Jesus was speaking directly to a specific church in what is now western Turkey that had grown lukewarm as a group. As part of the warning, Jesus said that because they were neither cold nor hot but lukewarm, He would spit them out—and of course, today, that specific church no longer exists because they didn't repent.

The *principle* behind this is that the Lord is very displeased with people who are lukewarm in their faith—but this doesn't mean that He is pleased with people who are cold toward Him. Because He is displeased, the Lord can remove His hand of blessing from both individuals *and* churches. However, unlike the church in Laodicea, the direct application of going out of existence is not for any other church. It *could* happen—but it was *guaranteed* to happen in Laodicea because He was speaking to them. At the same time, we both know churches and individuals that are lukewarm or cold yet continue to exist, with the churches growing in attendance and with bigger and bigger facilities.

So, once again, we look at passages to see how they were intended to be understood in their *literary* and *historical* context—then we look for the eternal principles that are embedded in the passages and see how those can be applied today to ourselves.

All of the Bible is completely relevant. It is literally and inerrantly the inspired Word of God. The question regarding any passage is not "Is it applicable?" but rather "How is it applicable?" Jonathan Cahn misapplies the passage in 2 Chronicles, just as he does with Isaiah 9:10, which is the foundation for *The Harbinger*. Sadly, millions have been misled by those teachings and interpretations of the Bible found in Cahn's book.

THE HARBINGER: FACT OR FICTION?
See page 12 to order.

THIS LITTLE CHURCH HAD NONE

EXCERPTED FROM *This Little Church Had None: A Church in Search of the Truth* BY GARY E. GILLEY WITH JAY WEGTER

The Misplaced Mandate for Truth

A FEW YEARS AGO I wrote a book entitled *This Little Church Went to Market: The Church in the Age of Entertainment*. There I explored in detail areas in which I believe the “seeker-sensitive” church model is missing the mark biblically, especially in regard to its gospel and doctrinal messages. That book was followed by *This Little Church Stayed Home: A Faithful Church in Deceptive Times*. The original intent was to identify the marks of a truly biblical church standing firm in the face of wide-scale assaults by the forces of deception. While a portion of that volume was in fact dedicated to this objective, I also felt compelled specifically to address the areas of deception surrounding the rapidly growing emergent church movement.

In this, the third book in the Little Church series, I want to talk about “a church in search of truth.” My contention is that the great need of the moment is for Christ’s church to rediscover the truth that it has either lost or minimized, to understand the inestimable value of the truth in the lives of God’s people and to recognize its role as the supporter and dispenser of that truth (1 Tm 3:15). I have entitled this book *This Little Church Had None: A Church in Search of the Truth* because I believe that the majority of so-called evangelical churches and Christians have lost, or at least misplaced, this important mandate. Truth has been sacrificed on the altars of pragmatism, church growth, postmodern ideologies, paganism, and hedonism, to name a few. In many cases this defection from truth is not so much by design as the result of ignorance and neglect. A whole generation of believers has grown up in churches in which the Word of God has not been systematically taught and appreciated. While there are notable and happy exceptions to this, nevertheless we should not be surprised to find that the people of this generation have marginalized the place of the Scriptures in their lives.

To be sure, in many evangelical circles you hear a little more about Jesus; an occasional prayer is offered; a few choruses are sung, and popular verses of Scripture and slogans thrown around—but little more. The average Christian is marching to the same beat as his unbelieving counterpart, both living out their own patchwork philosophies of life based upon a mix of pragmatism, social standards and faddish ideologies, with a dash of Scripture added....

Sadly, this is how many children of God have been raised by their leaders. They have no idea that Christ has called them to something more—lives truly based upon the truth of his Word. And if they have a vague suspicion that there is something more, something deeper, something better, than the life they are experiencing, they have no concept where to search for it. These deficiencies are increasingly being recognized by the mainstream evangelical church, but the remedy is not. What is needed is a return to full confidence in the power and the authority of the Word of God, which in turn will cause church leaders to teach once again the full counsel of the Lord.

The Constant Flux Concerning “Truth”

Ever since my college days I have enjoyed the study of philosophy. It is fascinating to delve into the reasoning of thinkers like

Plato, Descartes, or Kant and study how they pieced life together. However, I have always deliberated on these philosophies from a biblical vantage point. That is, I have found their ideas interesting, yet largely flawed in the light of the teachings of Scripture. But, as I examined the writings of such philosophers, I have often thought about the reaction of unbelievers to the same concepts. For one thing is very noticeable about philosophies—they are constantly changing. As each new philosopher comes along, he rejects the views of the previous one. Each generation considers the last generation, with its set of ideas, systems of thought, and social structures, as passé, apparently not recognizing that the next generation will cast the same censorious comments on the current one.

This constant flux concerning truth must be most frustrating to those without Christ as they observe historically the changing views of thinking people. Even within our own lifetimes the rapid presentation of new worldviews that promised to solve the “mysteries of life”—only to be soon relegated to the philosophical rubbish heap and replaced with the newest idea on the block—has to be unsettling. It is no wonder that postmodernism has taken root in Western thinking. After all, if Plato, Descartes, Kant, and a whole train-load of others have presented unique systems of truth, only to be rejected and contradicted by the next set of thinkers, after a while one begins to assume that maybe there is no such thing as objective, universal truth. Perhaps what remains is selective truth, temporary truth, individual truth (truth for you, but not for me).

If the “truth claims” of the best and brightest from the past have not proved true, then what hope do we have that the next philosophy will offer the key to life’s issues? In a real sense, after thousands of years riding the merry-go-round of philosophical thought, people have grown tired and want to get off the ride. There apparently is no absolute truth. There is no final authority. There is no one whose ideas are superior to anyone else’s. We are left with relativism—let each of us do his own thing and believe his own way and let’s just accept one another’s ideas as equal. Eventually all of this rings hollow. Postmodernism, which challenges absolute truth and embraces relativism, has been birthed from the ashes of disillusionment.

Popular film star Brad Pitt, in an interview with *Rolling Stone* magazine, expressed well the disillusionment that many face today. Pitt was discussing a character (Tyler) whom he played in the movie *Fight Club*:

PITT: The point is, the question has to be asked: “What track are we on?” Tyler starts out in the movie saying, “Man, I know all these things are supposed to seem important to us—the car, the condo, our versions of success—but if that’s the case, why is the general feeling out there reflecting more impotence and isolation and desperation and loneliness?” If you ask me, I say, “Toss all this, we gotta find something else.” Because all I know is that at this point in time, we are heading for a dead end, a numbing of the soul, a complete atrophy of the spiritual being. And I don’t want that.

RS: So if we’re heading toward this kind of existential dead end in society, what do you think should happen?

PITT: Hey, man, I don't have those answers yet. The emphasis now is on success and personal gain. [Smiles] I'm sitting in it, and I'm telling you, that's not it.

RS: But, and I'm glad you said it first, people will read your saying that and think...

PITT: I'm the guy who's got everything. I know. But I'm telling you, once you get everything, then you're just left with yourself. I've said it before and I'll say it again: It doesn't help you sleep any better, and you don't wake up any better because of it. Now, no one's going to want to hear that. I understand it. I'm sorry I'm the guy who's got to say it. But I'm telling you.

Of course postmodernism did not invent disillusionment; it is the ultimate trademark of any philosophical or religious system that denies [a] biblical understanding of the reality of life. In T. S. Eliot's poem "The Hollow Men" we find the same struggle:

*This is the way the way the world ends,
This is the way the way the world ends,
This is the way the way the world ends,
Not with a bang but a whimper.*

There is something within the nature of man that rejects this type of existence and end. There has to be more to our life than what many experience. Something has gone wrong but, having already factored out the biblical view of reality, people are forced to turn to false sources for a handle on life. Having missed the fountain of life, they must dig other wells (Jer 2:13).

The Scripture has a different story to tell. Paul informs us in Romans 1:19-23 that man's problem is that he has suppressed the truth about God which has been revealed in the creation around him. This suppression has led to darkened hearts and imaginations that are empty of spiritual reality. Man tries to fill in the blanks with whatever might be in vogue at the moment—in biblical times it was idols and the direct, conscious worship of creation. Today it might be New Age philosophy, Eastern religions, human achievement, humanistic theory, modernistic certainty, postmodern uncertainty, or any number of other ideas.

The bottom line is that mankind has rejected God and His truth and suffers the consequences of that choice as God hands him over to enslavement by his own worldview, with its resulting sins (Rom 1:24-32). It is no wonder people are disillusioned with life; sin and false beliefs ultimately have that effect. As the world system propagates its various views and philosophies we should expect nothing less than minds scratching about in empty speculation and foolish hearts wandering around in darkness (Rom 1:21).

The Providential Pillar of Truth

Enter the church. One of the things that separates the church from all other organizations is that it is to be the pillar and support of the truth (1 Tim 3:15). The congregation which is not functioning as the support and dispenser of truth falls short of the biblical criteria for a local church; therefore the assembly which does not major on truth does not fit the definition of a New Testament church. Its attendance may be "mega," its programs prolific, its enthusiasm contagious, and its motives honourable, but if it is not the pillar and support of truth it fails in its job description as a church. Call it a club, a social gathering, a political-awareness group, a socially concerned assembly, or an entertainment centre, but don't call it a church.

The church that has God's understanding of truth will begin thinking biblically. This is often called a "biblical worldview."

In attempting to discern how widespread a biblical worldview is today (or how similar the beliefs of people are to the teaching of Scripture) pollster George Barna developed a rather minimalist list of required beliefs. They were as follows:

1. Believing that absolute moral truth exists.
2. Believing that such truth is defined by the Bible.
3. And the firm belief in six specific religious views:
 - Jesus Christ lived a sinless life.
 - God is the all-powerful and all-knowing Creator of the universe and He still rules today.
 - Salvation is a gift from God and cannot be earned.
 - Satan is a living force.
 - Christians have a responsibility to share their faith in Christ with other people.
 - The Bible is accurate in all its teachings.

As stated above, this is a barebones list. With the addition of even a few other essentials of the Christian faith (e.g., the bodily resurrection of Jesus, the bodily resurrection of people, the actual existence of heaven and hell, eternal judgment, the virgin birth, the Scriptures as the inspired Word of God, etc.), the numbers heralded as having a biblical worldview would plummet drastically. As it is, the statistics are startling. In 2007 Barna identified 40 percent of Americans as born again (this statistic is highly suspect to me, but we will go with it for now) and 7 percent as evangelical Christians. The results of the study indicated that "most Americans do not have strong and clear beliefs, largely because they do not possess a coherent biblical worldview....Most Americans have one foot in the biblical camp, and one foot outside it."

In Barna's most recent study it was discovered that only 9 percent of those who he claims are born again have a biblical worldview. In a later survey of the clergy it was found that only 51 percent of Protestant pastors have a biblical worldview, even by Barna's minimalist definition. He states, "The low percentage of Christians who have a biblical worldview is a direct reflection of the fact that half of our primary religious teachers and leaders do not have one." But it gets worse: The research also points out that even in churches where the pastor has a biblical worldview, most of the congregants do not. More than six out of every seven congregants in the typical church do not share the biblical worldview of their pastor even when he or she has one. [According to Barna], developing a biblical worldview in a congregation requires:

...a lot of purposeful activity: teaching, prayer, conversation, accountability, and so forth. [However] if the 51% of pastors who have a biblical worldview were to strategically and relentlessly assist their congregants in adopting such a way of interpreting and responding to life, the impact on our churches, families, and society at-large would be enormous.

To this end this book is dedicated. We shall seek to understand the opposition to having and living a biblical worldview, identify what steps we must take to implement the same in our churches, and then consider how to evangelize people from the framework of a biblical worldview.

[See page 2 to order This Little Church Had None]

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Kalisher serves as a Pastor of Jerusalem Assembly — House of Redemption and as a Bible Teacher at inter-congregational conventions and activities in Israel and abroad. Meno and his wife Anat have four children. His father Zvi is a Jewish survivor of the Nazi holocaust.



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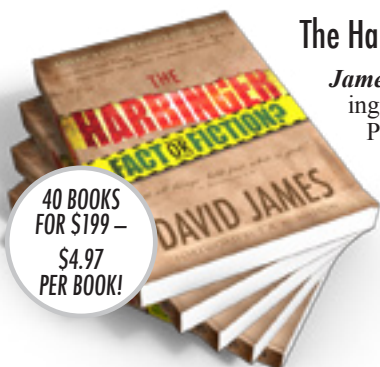
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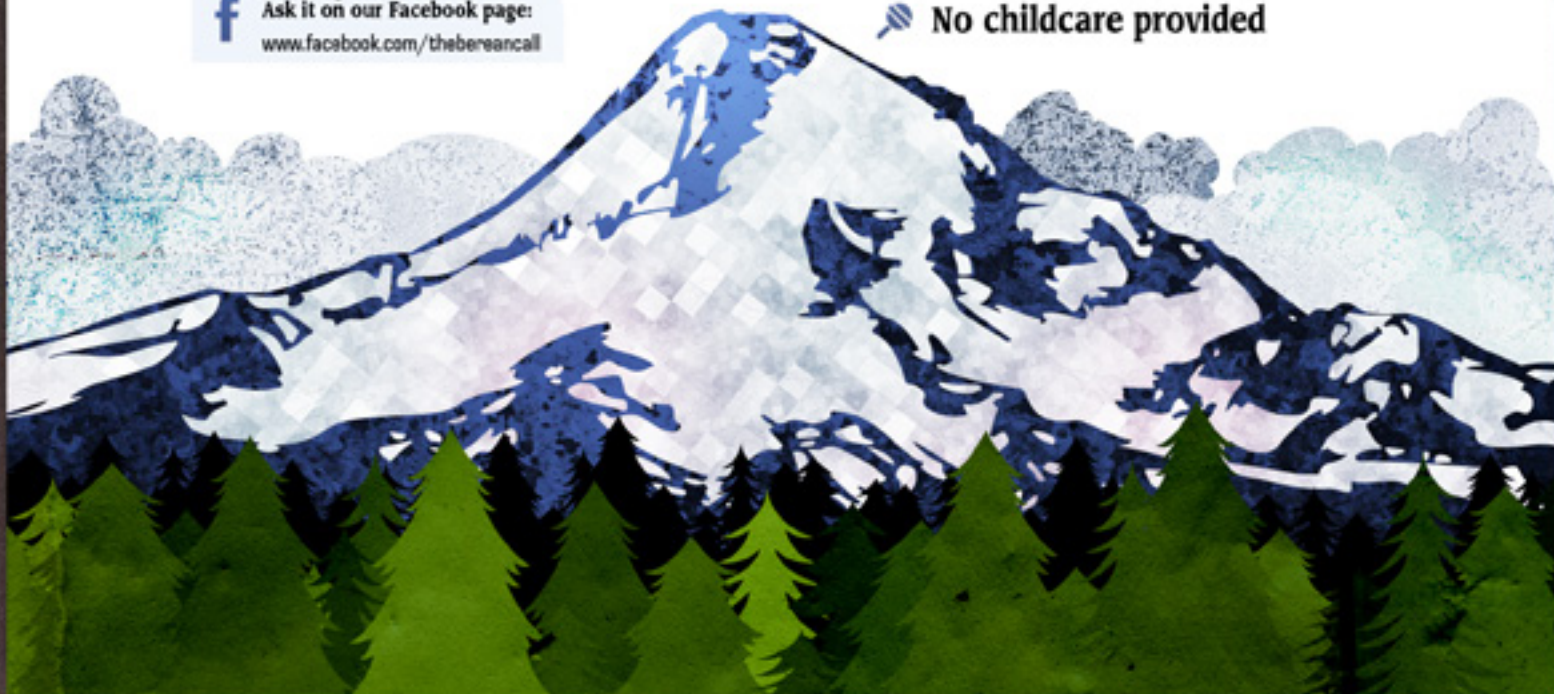
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