

# THE BEREAN CALL

P.O. Box 7019 Bend, Oregon 97708

www.thebereanall.org

July 2004

## Why?

Dave Hunt

Most parents have been frustrated (or amused) by a small child's persistent question, "Why?" repeated almost endlessly. Every attempted answer brings yet another inevitable, "But *why?*" Even young children recognize that there must be a reason for everything. The relentless "Why?" reflects the instinctive search for an ultimate answer beyond which there are no more questions. For some, this natural curiosity begins a search for God, the One who promised, "Ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer 29:13). Too often, however, the search is never with the whole heart; and what may have begun as honest seeking soon sours for one invalid reason (excuse) or another.

As children grow older and disappointment turns into cynicism, many lose interest in vital questions and their lives center around worldly trivia. The God-implanted spiritual thirst of the soul for the One who "is love" (1 Jn 4:8) and who made man for Himself, and for the spiritual "water of life" that only Christ can give (Jn 4:14; 7:37-39; Rv 22:17), is misunderstood as a thirst of the body for something physical. What should be an echo of "my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God" (Ps 42:2; 84:2) becomes "I thirst for money, sex, pleasure, success, expensive clothes, and gourmet food"—and the emptiness worsens.

In high school and university, trusting students "learn" that there is no truth, there are no absolutes, no ultimate answers, everything is relative—so what is the point of anything? The gate to eternal life is too narrow for their taste ("O taste and see that the Lord is good" [Ps 34:8] seems mystical, foolish), so they join the multitudes on the broad road "that leadeth to destruction" (Mt 7:13-14). Life becomes a vain pursuit of fleshly enjoyment for the moment—and many churches, tragically, pander to this deadly obsession with pleasure and fun. They offer shallow, unchallenging teaching to attract the young "to Christ."

There are few (even among Christians) who give much thought or serious preparation to eternity—yes, *eternity*. Whatever

work of the Holy Spirit (convincing and convicting "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment" - Jn 16:8) has taken root in the heart is stifled by the "care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches" (Mt 13:22). And the older one gets (with little exception), the slipperier the slope that slides into *death*.

There are, however, many unsaved people who cannot escape the sober realization that this brief life ends all too soon—and who fear what lies beyond. They crave sound answers to serious questions that haunt them in moments of reflection. It's not more trivia that fills daily life that they seek, but the ultimate answers to life's most important questions. It is to these persons that Peter tells us we must be ready *always* to give a "reason" for the hope we have in Christ (1 Pt 3:15). The Lord has led me to many such persons, often the one sitting next to me on an airplane, or a

**Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not...**

*Ecclesiastes 12:1*

taxi driver, or...who knows?

Most people who have thought seriously about life and death know that God exists. For those in doubt, we can prove God's existence quickly (see *TBC*, Aug '02). Most people have no real hope of heaven, so would prefer to believe that death is the end. That delusion is easily dispelled. We can prove that we are non-physical beings who continue into eternity even after the physical body we lived in is laid in the grave (see *TBC*, Aug '02). This fact leads to serious consequences that must be faced in this life. To wait until after death is obviously too late, for "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment..." (Heb 9:27).

For those who recognize that the grave doesn't end one's existence, Satan has other lies such as spirit survival and reincarnation—again easily refuted (see *TBC*, Sep '98). It is the thought of judgment and *eternal* punishment that most non-Christians (and even many who claim to be Christians) find most difficult to accept. And closely related is the troubling question of why a good God would allow sin and suffering.

Right here we are forced to disagree with Calvinism's claim that everything that happens—every tragedy and wickedness—is exactly what God willed from eternity past. That belief would seem to justify the atheist's complaint: "If your 'God' can't prevent all suffering and evil, he is too weak to be God; and if he can and doesn't, he is a monster unworthy of our trust."

Of course, the simple answer is that God is not the cause of evil. Man is. Yes, but God *allows* evil. Is that any better than causing it? Obviously, there is a huge difference. Only one explanation of the horrible state of this world rings true to conscience and is declared in the Bible (and here again we find ourselves in conflict with our Calvinist friends). God gave man a free will so that we could willingly and with understanding love Him and each other and not be brutes ruled by instinct; or worse, mere puppets with God pulling the strings.

Thus, the only way to eliminate evil from this world would be to annihilate the human race because, as Jesus said, "Out of the heart [of man] proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries..." (Mt 15:19). The damning truth that "the heart [my heart, your heart] is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer 17:9) is not easy to face. We love to blame everyone else—a trait psychology encourages by teaching that it is never *my* fault but the fault of parents, society, circumstances, "tough breaks," etc. The first step toward a cure is to take the blame ourselves and willingly face the consequences.

So man is a sinner, and sin must be punished. What the Bible declares makes sense and every conscience knows it: whatever the penalty prescribed by the law, it must be paid. If God did not punish sin, He would be condoning it. A major problem in our society today is that lack of punishment results in revolving doors on prisons, marriage vows that have become meaningless and are broken with scarcely a twinge of guilt or remorse, no dread of consequences, and little sympathy for others because consciences have been "seared with a hot iron" (1 Tm 4:2). This is the world *man* has made. It is not the world God created.

Man was created in the image of God to reflect the very character of God in every

thought, word, and deed. But he was to do so knowingly and willingly, not as a robot or wind-up toy. He had to have a free will so that he could voluntarily and in love fulfill God's purpose for his existence.

Adam and Eve willfully chose to disobey God, thereby destroying themselves as God had made them. Sin is coming "short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). No amount of good deeds in the future could pay for sinning in the past. By very definition of who He is, God could not tolerate rebellion in His universe. He immediately cast Adam and Eve out of the idyllic paradise He had created for them—but not without graciously and lovingly offering them an alternative. They and their descendants could be reconciled to Him, on His terms, of course—or they could suffer eternal separation, not just from the Garden but from His holy presence. The choice was theirs and their descendants' to make.

Having been created for fellowship with God who had given them life and who alone could sustain it, separation from Him was, of course, the sentence of death. God had made that clear from the beginning. He had given Adam and Eve the easiest command possible—out of the hundreds (and perhaps thousands) of trees in the garden, they were to abstain from eating the fruit of just one. That's all, only one! And God clearly warned, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gn 2:17). Death was not in the fruit but in the disobedience.

One can't even play a game without rules. Surely it is only reasonable that God should have rules in His universe. Without physical laws, the universe (if it could even exist) would be unimaginable chaos. That man is a moral being requires moral rules, and to allow them to be broken without punishment would bring moral chaos. We see this on a small scale in families where well-meaning but foolishly indulgent parents, by not punishing their children consistently each time they break the rules, train them to be rebels. The child quickly learns that it can have its own way and soon ruins life for everyone.

Life itself teaches us how foolish it is to ask why there should be punishment for sin. Every person understands why this must be, whether they admit it or not. And right here we encounter a serious roadblock to faith for many people. Unquestionably, the Bible teaches that the punishment for sin is *eternal*. Jesus clearly warned of hell and referred to "hell...fire that *never* shall be quenched" (Mk 9:45).

"Why?" comes the inevitable complaint. "*Why* should the punishment for sin be *eternal*? That seems too harsh! Why can't God punish us for varying lengths of time

depending upon each one's sins, and then forgive us? Why would God sentence anyone, even a Hitler, to *eternal* punishment? Why must the lake of fire be *eternal*?" The answer is found in who God is and in the fact that "God created man in his own image" (Gn 1:27). Let us consider carefully what that means.

The penalty for sin is death. Obviously, death separates from life—but life comes from God, so death separates from Him, the Life-Giver. Thus, there is no cure for death except for the sinner to become pure and holy in God's sight in order to be reconciled to Him. Contrary to the Roman Catholic belief in the purging of sin in the flames of some imaginary "purgatory," no punishment of the sinner could ever cleanse him of his sin.

God is perfect in holiness and cannot fellowship with sinners. It's not a question of policy—whether or not a soft attitude would encourage sin. It's a matter of who God is, the very nature of His being. He cannot compromise with evil, cannot go back on His word. *Cannot?* Yes, *cannot*: "He cannot deny himself" (2 Tm 2:13). And that is why the penalty for sin is *eternal*

**Wherewithal shall a young man  
cleanse his way? by taking heed  
thereto according to thy word.**

*Psalm 119:9*

death—not extermination, but separation from God forever!

Willful defiance of God cannot be tolerated. This is not harshness on God's part; it is the inevitable consequence of sin. A breach of God's moral laws can no more be allowed than a breach of the physical laws. The outcome is demanded by the very nature of the act itself and by the God who has been defied. The law of gravity cannot suddenly be reversed (just in this case, please!) for a person falling from the top floor of a 50-story building, whether he fell accidentally, jumped, or was shoved.

God has pronounced the penalty for sin. If He went back on His Word, how could we believe anything else He said? By the very definition of who God is and by the nature of sin, the penalty for sin must stand. But man cannot possibly pay it; only Christ could, and He did. The proof that He paid the penalty in full is that He conquered death and rose from the grave. The only remedy for death is *resurrection*. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he

were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (Jn 11:25-26).

No one has yet experienced death in its awful fullness and finality—its utter separation from God, the "lake of fire...the second death" (Rv 20:14)—no one, that is, but Christ, who "taste[d] death for every man" (Heb 2:9). No wonder, as He took our place under God's just judgment, He cried out in agony from the Cross, "My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46).

The rich man in hell is a pitiful example of spiritual blindness unto death. He had spent a lifetime attempting to satisfy his innate spiritual thirst for God with riches and success. And now in hell, he cannot escape that tragic delusion. His physical tongue is in the grave with his dead body, but he imagines it is parched with physical thirst—and he asks Abraham to send Lazarus with just "the tip of his finger" bearing a drop of physical water to cool his "tongue" (Lk 16:24). He disdained the "water of life" when God offered it, and now in hell, he doesn't even recognize the nature or cause of his thirst. All of his life he sought to physically quench a spiritual thirst, and now that thirst will burn forever for the water of life that he despised when it was available to "whosoever will" (Rv 22:17).

Jesus said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink" (Jn 7:37); and of the rabbis He said, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (Jn 5:40).

A physical drink of water tastes so good for the same reason that thirst hurts so bad: water is essential to our physical bodies. So it is with the water of life. It is absolutely essential for the life of the soul and the spirit. Thus, the lake of fire will be the torment of a burning spiritual thirst beyond description *for the same reason* that heaven will be a satisfaction beyond our present imagination.

The burning thirst that can't be quenched in the lake of fire will never end for the same reason that the unspeakable ecstasy in heaven will not cease for all eternity: "In thy presence is fullness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps 16:11). God made us for Himself, for His love, His joy, His companionship. To be separated from Him in death is to agonize in endless torment for what the redeemed in heaven experience.

May we fully awaken in this life to the truth of our eternal inheritance so that we may love and praise our Lord as we ought, without waiting until heaven to do so. And may we be used of God to awaken many unsaved to come to Christ and drink of the water of life while they still have the opportunity. **TBC**

## Quotable

Imagine the One who is so infinitely high being so intimately nigh to each one of us, as miniscule as we are in the universe!

*Author unknown*

During the latter part of 1968, a young Christian in Prague, Czechoslovakia, witnessed to another young Czech named Jan Palach. There seemed to be genuine interest on Jan's part, and so the Christian promised to deliver a New Testament to him. He was filled with good intentions but he let weeks pass before he even obtained the New Testament. Then he kept delaying its actual delivery. On January 16, 1969, Jan Palach stood in St. Wencelas Square, poured gasoline over his body and set himself afire. He never lived to see the New Testament that had been promised to him. Good intentions are not enough....Amy Carmichael wrote, "The vows of God are upon me. I may not stay to play with shadows or pluck flowers till I my work have done...."

*William MacDonald, One Day at a Time, p. 149 (See Resource Pages)*

## Q&A

**Question:** How do I counsel my unbelieving sister about yoga?

**Answer:** She has been deceived and must be willing to face the truth or there is no deliverance. With its breathing exercises and limbering-up positions, yoga is promoted in the West as a way to enhance health and better *living*—but in the East it is understood to be a way of *dying*, indeed *the way* to escape this world of time and sense and to unite with the infinite. Thinking they are buying *health*, millions are unwittingly embracing *Hinduism* and opening themselves to the occult.

Hatha Yoga is supposedly safe because it is *physical* yoga. But all yoga is Hinduism. All of the positions and breathing exercises are specifically designed for yoking with Brahman, the universal All of Hinduism. If the goal is physical fitness, one should use exercises designed to that end, not one designed for reaching godhood. An authoritative Hatha Yoga text, the 15th century Svatanmarama's *Hathayoga-Pradipika*, lists Lord Shiva as the first Hatha Yoga teacher.

The average yoga instructor never mentions (and may not know about) the many warnings in ancient texts that "Hatha Yoga is a dangerous tool." One can be possessed by a Hindu deity (demon) through the altered state of consciousness induced by this practice.

One of the most ancient *religious* practices is being passed off as *science*. Yoga was introduced by Lord Krishna in the *Baghavat Gita* as the sure way to Hindu heaven; and Shiva (one of the most feared Hindu deities, known as "The Destroyer") is addressed as *Yogeshwara*, Lord of Yoga. No wonder yoga can be so destructive. In *Yoga Journal*, Ken Wilbur, a yoga expert known as the "Einstein of consciousness," warns that Eastern meditation, no matter how carefully practiced, involves "a whole series of deaths and rebirths...rough and frightening times."

David Pursglove, transpersonal therapist for decades, warns that Eastern meditation can produce "Frightening ESP and other parapsychological occurrences...out-of-body experiences...[encounters] with death and subsequent rebirth...awakening of the serpent power (Kundalini)...violent shaking and twisting..." The *Brain/Mind Bulletin* warns that "such experiences are common among people involved in Yoga, [Eastern] meditation..."

Consider a typical letter from one of our readers: "My daughter, age 43, for the past 10 years has been involved with Hatha Yoga, and at the present time she is experiencing exactly what you describe in *Occult Invasion*, p. 225 ["violent shaking, hallucinations, murderous impulses...uncontrollable rage...trying to commit suicide..."]. She would like to give up yoga and be released from the spirit of her last teacher that is currently inflicting excruciating pain upon her. We've taken her to several doctors, but they have been of no help. Her mother and I are at our wit's end.... Please help."

**Question:** You claim that Christ became a man to pay the penalty His justice—demanded for our sins. Why would He have to become a man? Why would God go to all that trouble, when as God He could have just forgiven us?

**Answer:** I deal with this somewhat in this month's article. God's love, grace and mercy cannot override His justice. The penalty He has pronounced for sin must be paid. For a judge to fail to mete out the sentence demanded by the law would make him a partner in the crime. God cannot waive the penalty He has pronounced. That would make Him a liar and mean that He gives His approval to the very sin He has condemned. It would be contrary to God's very nature and being to do so.

Why did Christ have to become a man in order to pay the penalty for sin? Man sinned, the penalty has been pronounced upon all mankind, and must therefore be paid by man. But no finite man, being a sinner under the penalty himself, could pay the infinite

penalty for all mankind. Thus, God had to become a man. If Jesus were not God and man in one person, He could not have paid the penalty for the sins of the world.

No religion in the world offers such salvation, or could offer it. Yet many who call themselves Christians reject what the Bible teaches and what our consciences know about sin and its penalty. Churches and cults, such as the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches, offer "salvation" by means that no court of law would accept: rituals, sacraments, works, and prayers in payment for sin. Catholics imagine that Mary will get them into heaven, and to that end seek her favor. I expose such folly in this way: Suppose I am in jail awaiting trial. You warn me that the judge is strict. I reply, "Don't worry, I'll get off—I know the judge's mother!" We call that corruption, rightly condemned in earthly courts. Certainly God will not allow it in His heavenly court!

**Question:** Why do Christians worship on Sunday? I see no biblical basis to omit one commandment. I must settle this, because I want to obey the Lord.

**Answer:** We addressed this in the May '99 *TBC*. Critics claim that Constantine (or the Roman Catholic Church) changed the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. Who cares? No one has the power to change the Sabbath. It was and always will be Saturday. But Christians do not *worship* on the Sabbath, the day in which God rested from His work of the first creation. We are not part of that old creation, but each Christian is "in Christ...a new creature: old things are passed away...all things are become new" (2 Cor 5:17). Christ rose from the dead on Sunday, the first day of a new week, the "firstborn from the dead" (Col 1:18), the progenitor of a new race of born-again men and women. That is why we meet together to worship the Lord on Sunday, "the first day of the week" (Acts 20:7).

**Question:** Don't people in different cultures differ on what they think is right or wrong? How can all mankind be held to one standard when there is such a wide variety of opinion concerning morality?

**Answer:** I don't know where you get the idea that different cultures have "a wide variety of opinion concerning morality." In fact, that isn't the case. The Bible declares that God has written His moral laws (the Ten Commandments minus the Fourth about keeping the Sabbath) in every human conscience (Rom 2:14-15). This common moral understanding in spite of differences in culture is one of the many proofs



that man did not evolve but was created in the moral and spiritual image of God.

Of course, various cultures develop customs, some of which violate God's laws. Yet even cannibals cannot escape the realization in their conscience that they are doing wrong. They simply justify themselves because this is the way it is done in their society, but they still know it isn't right. Don't you think the Nazis knew in their conscience that it was wrong to murder Jews and others? They managed to justify themselves because they had become hardened to the truth; but deep inside, they still knew what was right and what was wrong. So it is with all mankind, regardless of their race, religion or culture.

**Question:** Is the woman called "mystery Babylon" in Revelation 17 the city of Babylon that is being rebuilt in Iraq?

**Answer:** As far as I know, ancient Babylon, partially rebuilt by Saddam Hussein, is no longer being rebuilt. Of course, the forces occupying Iraq are using some of Babylon's structures for housing the military command. Last September the U.S. Commander, Lieutenant General Richard Sanchez, presided over a ceremony in Babylon where the U.S. Marines handed over control of central Iraq to Polish forces—but that is a far cry from Babylon becoming what is portrayed as "Mystery Babylon" in Revelation 17-18. Some evangelical leaders have referred to such recent events there as though of great prophetic significance, but I see none.

Ancient Babylon, though somewhat restored through the efforts of Saddam prior to the American-led invasion, was in ruins for about 2,300 years, during which time it did not meet *any* of the criteria identifying "Mystery Babylon" in Revelation 17-18: a city on seven hills that rules over the kings of the earth; a spiritual entity that has committed fornication (i.e., spiritual harlotry) with earth's rulers; that is drunk with the blood of the saints martyred for Christ; whose colors are purple and scarlet; the smoke of her destruction can be seen by sailors in the sea; a city whose commerce has made merchants rich, etc. On the other hand, during these 2,300 years while Babylon was in ruins, Vatican City and Rome as headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church (also for some centuries secular Rome at the head of the Roman Empire) have fulfilled *all* of these identifying criteria. It would take many years for a rebuilt Babylon in the Iraqi desert to catch up to Rome in these respects—highly unlikely in my opinion.

Rebuilt Babylon is being touted as the

eventual headquarters of Antichrist. That seems rather remote. Furthermore, the beast upon which the woman (Mystery Babylon) rides will "hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire" (Rv 17:16). How can Babylon be the world headquarters of the Antichrist, yet he will destroy it? That hardly makes sense—but it does make sense that the Antichrist, who will at first need a partnership with the Pope and his church because of its worldwide structures, popularity, and power, will eventually turn against and destroy the whore when he no longer needs her and he sets himself up as "God" to be worshiped by all mankind.

**Question:** How can we know what God says without hearing through a human source and therefore making it a human opinion? How can we be sure that we are hearing what God says and not just what some religious leader tells us God said?

**Answer:** You have asked one of the most basic and important questions possible! Sadly, most people are perfectly willing to follow what some man says God said. I tell people who are sincere about this question to go to the Bible first. It claims to be the only true Word of God—and that all other "scriptures" are false, as are the religions they espouse. If we can prove the Bible is true, then we have saved a lot of time.

In fact, we can prove the Bible is true in many ways. The chief proof is found in prophecy, which is unique to the Bible. There are no prophecies of any substance to be found in the Qur'an, for example, or in the Hindu scriptures, the sayings of Buddha or of Confucius, etc. And biblical prophecies are not about obscure events, but foretell centuries and, in some cases thousands of years in advance some of the most significant occurrences in world history. We have no space to go into them here, but you will find these prophecies discussed in detail in past issues of *TBC* (Jul '92, Feb '98, Aug '01, Nov '01, Dec '03) as well as in some of my books, such as *A Woman Rides the Beast*, *In Defense of the Faith*, *An Urgent Call to a Serious Faith*, *Countdown to the Second Coming*, and *When Will Jesus Come?*

Our entire ministry is based upon calling everyone to study the Bible and not to accept anyone else's interpretation, including ours. We have every confidence that those who sincerely seek the truth and examine the Bible carefully will come to know the true God. The God of the Bible makes this promise: "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer 29:13). We are

assured that "he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb 11:6).

## News Alert

**Excerpts from LABYRINTHS—A NEW AND ANCIENT WAY TO PRAY (The Mennonite 6/1/2004):** Marlene Kropf, who teaches Christian spirituality and serves as spiritual director at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., is probably responsible for introducing more Mennonites to [Catholic mystical prayer] labyrinths than any one person. In 1998, when she was a staff person for the Mennonite Church's Board of Congregational Ministries, Marlene included the labyrinth as a prayer discipline in that year's Lenten material for congregations.

Gwen Groff, pastor of Bethany Mennonite Church in Bridgewater Corners, VT, also uses her church's "lawn labyrinth" as a personal prayer discipline....She has used it as part of a Communion service, too.

Michele Hershberger, chair of the Bible department at Hesston (KS) College as well as director of youth ministries there, discovered labyrinths at a Youth Specialties convention in Nashville, TN. There it was called a "prayer walk" and was set up in one of the convention halls for people to try. "It was just wonderful," Michele says. As a result of her experience, she ordered a kit from Group Publishing that told how to make a labyrinth on a large piece of cloth or a tarp.

Joetta Schlabach...works with daily access to a labyrinth as Wisdom Ways, a resource center for spirituality that is a collaboration between the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet and the College of St. Catherine. [In the Middle Ages the ritual was introduced so that Catholics, who could not make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, could obtain the same indulgences (time off from suffering in purgatory).]

What she finds as meaningful as walking is reading the entries that people write in the journal left at the labyrinth's entrance. "One 9-year-old wrote, 'I was afraid I'd get lost and have to start over, but when I got to the center, I knew I could trust myself.' I think that's a paradigm of Christian life."

[*TBC*: No, that's a "paradigm" of mysticism and occultism. It's a path that directs one inward to self. Ultimately, it leads to realizing that self is God or a part of God. The article attempts to rally biblical support: "Jeremiah 6:16 says, 'Stand at the crossroads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.' I think that's emblematic of the labyrinth." No, the labyrinth is "emblematic" of occult ritualism.]

## Dave's Itinerary

Aug-Sept	New Zealand, Australia New Zealand Coordinator Sam Cope - +64 (0)9528 4061 National Coordinator John Odell - +61 (0) 2 9869 7164 For the full Australia/New Zealand itinerary, visit our website: <a href="http://www.thebereancall.org">www.thebereancall.org</a>
Sept. 24-25	Olive Tree Ministries & Jan Markell Arden Hills MN (763) 493-3010 <a href="http://www.olivetreeviews.org">www.olivetreeviews.org</a>
Sept. 29- Oct. 1	Winnipeg Prophecy Conference Winnipeg MB Canada (204) 832-4627
Oct. 3	Berean Baptist Church Winnipeg MB Canada (204) 837-3699
Oct. 9-14	Calvary Gospel Chapel Southampton, Bermuda (441) 234-3250
Oct. 20-23 25-28	Congresso Chamada Brazil Pocos de Caldas Campina Grande 011 51 3241-5050 from the USA 0300 789-5051 only in Brazil <a href="http://www.Chamada.com.br">www.Chamada.com.br</a>

## Letters

To all at The Berean Call,

We received the book *The Purpose Driven Life* as a gift recently and as my wife and I went through it, we realized that there is no gospel message in it. So when your last newsletter came, I was glad to read that there are still some who are not taking in everything these "famous" teachers have to say but are searching the Scriptures to see if what they say is truth. Our hearts grieve for this generation of people who don't seem to know how to think or compare what's being fed them with Scripture! LO (Philippines)

Dear Bros. Hunt, McMahon & Staff,

*What Love Is This?* is highly appreciated and a valuable tool for those who are confused. May the Lord bless you abundantly, knowing the price you all had to pay to print the truth. We know people whose faith has been shipwrecked by Calvinism's misrepresentation of God. As we preach and hand out tracts, it is a wonderful thing to be able to say with clear consciences, "Whosoever will may come." HH (Australia)

Dear Dave, T.A., and Staff,

[Y]our newsletter serves as a welcome commentary on important and relevant issues....Our local church would probably seem old fashioned...if it is compared to the seeker-friendly mega-churches in the U.S....When we go to church, we come to praise and serve the Lord, not to be entertained. We long for His rebuke and exhortation, not to be flattered with the message of self-love. We sing the good, old psalms,

where God gets the glory....The Gospel is taught with deep reverence and fear of the holy and living God, to whom we owe everything....With grateful faith in Christ, we humbly receive the salvation which Jesus accomplished for mankind on the cross once for all. VM (Denmark)

Dear Sirs,

Having read *A Woman Rides the Beast*, I'd like to say that I wish every Catholic in the world would be given a copy of that book. It was through reading...the history of the Catholic Church by secular writers that I came to see Roman Catholicism for what it was and is. Even as a schoolchild, I was disgusted by the quite overt anti-Semitism of my schoolteachers, some of whom were Catholic priests. Dave Hunt has done an excellent job—as has Harvest House for publishing his work. MH (United Kingdom)

Dear Mr. Hunt,

I had looked forward to reading *Debating Calvinism*. I knew of Calvinism's claim that non-Calvinists do not understand real Calvinism. I had hoped Mr. White would enlighten me, but I was disappointed. His shallow arguments...only strengthen my opinion that real Calvinism is indeed a damnable heresy. White's handling of what is probably the most straightforward, simple, and probably the best-known passage in the entire Bible (John 3:16) is twisted to mean something different than what it says. But I thank God that "whosoever" means "whatever person, no matter who." And that includes me. RH (TN)

Mr. Hunt,

Please remove my name from the mailing list of *Berean Call*. I noticed a book written against the ministry of Bill Gothard titled *A Matter of Basic Principles*....Perhaps these two authors should read the Bible, then they could understand what the principles are....And if these two authors are indeed believers—watch out! You are criticizing God, not man. DR (MN)

Dear Dave and Tom,

Your printed articles and radio programs have answered so many questions that have troubled me. I especially want to thank Tom for writing the book *Showtime for the Sheep?* It opens our eyes to what the film is about. LW (Australia)

Dear Dave Hunt,

We have seen the darkening of the evangelical world because of compromises that have been made. This latest one, the Mel Gibson movie, seems far more than compromise; it seems that it is an absolute

deception that has come over the evangelical church. It has clouded the minds of many who were thought to be following the straight road—at least as far as I knew....It was such a shock to us to have our pastor recommend this movie—first without seeing it (he has always seemed so cautious—not impulsive); second, his defense of it after having seen it. His main reasoning was those leaders...who told him that it was "the greatest witnessing tool in the last 2,000 years." Really?? We are flabbergasted....We were accused of going to see it with too cynical an eye. Really? The people in the church bob their heads in agreement with what he has presented....So you see, you are an encourager for those who take God's Word very seriously—not wanting to add or subtract from what He has given us. MW (NV)

Dear Mr. Hunt,

As I devoured the April issue of *The Berean Call*, I was most pleasantly surprised to find the TBC Extra, "God's Words Compared with Eugene Peterson's Words in The Message." I have been waiting for something to be written about Mr. Peterson's writing. SB (OR)

## TBC Notes

### Anyone concerned?

Evangelical churches are currently the target of a massive campaign to sell them the video of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*. This "very Marian film" (according to Mel) is based upon the Catholic ritual of the Stations of the Cross as seen from the "perpetual Virgin Mary's" point of view.

It is being marketed to churches exclusively by Zondervan Publishers and Fox Home Entertainment, which are owned by media mogul Rupert Murdoch (who also owns 20th Century Fox Studios, Fox News, and Fox TV Network). For his huge contributions to the Catholic Church and the Holy See, Murdoch received a Papal Knighthood.

Shouldn't we take heed to the warning of Scripture that false teachers would arise and "bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them....[and they will] make merchandise of you" (2 Pt 2:1,3)?

T.A. McMahon  
Executive Director

The Berean Call is a nonprofit 501 [c] [3], tax-exempt corporation registered in the State of Oregon. It is overseen by an independent board which has full and final authority over all corporate assets, personnel, and affairs. (07/04)

# COMING SOON TO YOUR LOCAL CHURCH?

## BRING THE PASSION TO YOUR CHURCH.



Save \$300



Save \$400



Save \$96

*One* of the major concerns put forth in *Showtime for the Sheep?: The Church and The Passion of the Christ* is that the sheep of Christ have been led by their shepherds to eat from a biblically questionable feeding trough. Some, however, have argued that biblically literate Christians would use *The Passion of the Christ* as a point of discussion and an opportunity to witness to non-Christians. They would identify and correct the film's extra-biblical content while sharing the gospel. We're thankful if that has indeed taken place but it's been far from the norm. What has become manifest is something rather ominous.

As a result of the enthusiasm of many well-known evangelical leaders who exhorted the faithful to see the movie as many times as possible, *The Passion* became the subject of Bible studies for a multitude of evangelical churches and, consequently, "biblical truth" for hundreds of thousands of not-so-biblically literate evangelicals.

Since *The Passion* has come and gone from local theaters, some believe that the influence of the film will quickly fade away. On the contrary, it's likely to become a cherished and well-established icon that will adversely impact the church until the Lord returns. Why? On August 31, 2004, *The Passion of the Christ* DVD will pick up where the theatrical release left off. The *marketing* of the film to the evangelical church by Mel Gibson's distribution company resulted in resounding financial success. Now the *making of the sheep themselves* into a market

for the DVDs *by the shepherds* (local church leaders) will enhance those figures, and worse! Zondervan and Fox Home Entertainment will offer *The Passion* DVDs and VHS videos (through retail outlets) to churches in 50-copy bulk packs to re-sell to their members at discount prices. Special deals allow the churches to imprint their names and messages on the film's cases.

What will be the consequences for an evangelical church that professes to believe in the inerrancy, authority, and *sufficiency* of God's Word, yet who *sells* its members Mel Gibson's *visual interpretation* of Scripture, jam-packed with extra-biblical content gleaned from the writings of religious mystics (which is only part of the film's problems)? As churches make the movie a part of their *visual* library, won't that seem to validate it as biblically trustworthy for whoever views it? What of the churches whose membership, in overwhelming numbers, buys the DVD? What leader of such of a church would then dare to point out *The Passion's* critical problems? Discernment in the evangelical church in these Last Days is about to suffer a devastating blow.

If you have concerns about this for your own church, contact us to find out how you can have a complimentary copy of *Showtime for the Sheep?* and a personal note from T. A. McMahon sent directly to your pastor: [www.thebereancall.org](http://www.thebereancall.org) or call 800-937-6638.

