

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

841 Old Hickory Blvd.
Jackson, TN 38305
oldhickorycofc.com

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Should One Consider Parts of the Bible to Be Myths?

Did God really make the world in six days? Did Noah really build an ark and escape a global flood? Did Jonah really spend three days in the belly of a great fish? One would expect every Christian to answer these questions with a confident “yes!” However, some churches teach that the miraculous events recorded in the Old Testament are only myths or fiction.

While opinions on this subject may vary, the Bible itself speaks very clearly on the validity of the events recorded in the Old Testament.

For instance, Jesus spoke of Noah as a real man and the global flood as a real event. “But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matthew 24:37-39). If the account of Noah and the flood is just a myth, so is the Second Coming of Christ.

Jesus spoke of the account of Jonah and the great fish as if it were a real event. “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:39-40). If Jonah did not really spend three days and nights in the belly of the great fish, then Jesus did not really spend three days in the tomb.

Paul spoke of the forty years that the Children of Israel wandered in the wilderness as a real event and used it as a warning for the Christians of his day (1 Corinthians 10:1-12). Notice especially verse 11 – “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written *for our admonition*, upon whom the ends of the ages have come” (emphasis mine - HR). While some people would tell us that some Old Testament stories

were made up to make people fear and obey God, the inspired apostle said that these events really happened.

There are some serious consequences to believing that parts of the Bible are fiction. First, it denies the statements that Jesus and His apostles made concerning the historical accuracy of these events. Second, such a belief weakens the integrity of the Word of God. Consider how worthless Hebrews chapter eleven becomes if some of the events in that chapter never really occurred. How can the Bible claim “The entirety of Your word is truth” (Psalm 119:160) when it contains fiction? Third, a denial of the miraculous events of the Old Testament simply opens the door for a denial of the miraculous events recorded in the New Testament. Many so-called Christians have already walked through this door, denying such fundamental truths as the Lord’s virgin birth and His resurrection. Once a man has been convinced that the miraculous events in the Old Testament are not true, why would he believe that the miracles recorded in the New Testament are true? If any part of the Bible is false, all Scripture is then suspect, even the promises of eternal life!

One will gain the best understanding of the Bible when he allows the Bible to speak for itself. The Bible does use parables and figures of speech, however the Bible often tells us when these figures of speech are being used. Unless we are told otherwise, we should understand the words that we are reading in the Bible to be literal accounts of historical facts.

- Heath Rogers

Reminding You

Most people enjoy learning new things. Gaining new knowledge is exciting and important. This is certainly so when God’s will is the subject being considered.

What is rare is the mastering of a subject. We are in awe of those individuals who show such a mastery. A philatelist who can discuss the value of an inverted Jenny, or the 1847 issue of the block of 16 Ben Franklins is pretty impressive to those of us who had to look up the term “philatelist” (stamp collector), and have no idea what an inverted Jenny is! Conversely, those of us who know Dirk Nowitzki’s rank on the list of career NBA scorers (6th), and who he last passed to get there (Wilt Chamberlain) may be considered a little crazy. (Note: I didn’t have to look those up).

Familiarity and relative mastery of God’s revealed will is impressive (few make the effort), and important (the subject is impactful of our final standing in eternity). As such it is worthy

of our effort to not only learn new things, but to become completely familiar with what we already know. With that in mind, consider Peter's words:

"For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease" (2 Peter 1:12-15).

- Stan Cox

Who Is A Christian?

The greatest compliment which can be paid to any man is to state, in truth, that he is a Christian (a follower of Christ). There is no strength in having hope in death which can be compared to the strength and hope which flow from this name. But who is a Christian? How can we identify a Christian, or be sure that we are Christians?

THE NEGATIVE SIDE

(1) One cannot identify a Christian as simply being a morally good person. Goodness and morality are characteristics of every Christian, but they do not make one a Christian. Nicodemus was an upright man, a teacher of Israel, but he could not enter the Kingdom without the new birth of water and of the Spirit. (John 3:5). Cornelius was a devout Gentile, a God-fearing man, but he was not a Christian until he heard and obeyed the Gospel. (Acts 11:14; 10:48). There are many men like these today, whose lives have been influenced by the moral teachings of Jesus Christ, but who are not Christians because they have never taken up the cross of obedient discipleship (Matt. 16:24).

(2) Being religious does not make a Christian! The idolaters of Athens were very religious but they were not Christians (Acts 17:22). Those who followed the "Jews' religion" were not Christians (Gal. 1:13). Nearly all of the conversions recorded in the Acts of the Apostles are conversions of people who were already religious, but whose religion was not acceptable to God: the Jews on Pentecost, the Bible-reading Ethiopian of Acts 8, the young Jewish leader, Saul, the devout Gentile of Acts 10, the prayerful Lydia - all of these were religious BEFORE they became Christians.

(3) The Old Testament saints were not Christians. The great patriarchs through whom God begat the nation of Israel, and the prophets of Israel, were men of God. Their lives were filled with faith, obedience, and many other exemplary characteristics, but they lived before Christ came, before the church began, and before the name "Christian" was given.

The thief on the cross was not a Christian: the Lord's words were spoken to him during the dying hours of the Law of Moses. The great commission of Christ, which makes Christians, had not yet been given (Mk. 16:15-16).

(4) Not all believers are Christians! Modern Protestant doctrine, reacting to the human system of works taught by Roman Catholicism, has declared that salvation is by faith only. We cannot believe that the Jews who believed in Christ, but would not confess Him due to their fear and love of praise of the Pharisees, were saved by belief alone (John 12:42-43). James wrote, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." (James 2: 24). No man is a Christian until he is justified, and no man is justified by faith alone; hence, no man is a Christian by faith alone!

(5) Not all church members are Christians. A majority of those who are church members today are members of churches whose names and practices are not taught in the Bible. They are part of denominationalism which is contrary to the letter and the spirit of the New Testament with its commands for unity. Every man-made church will be rooted up, our Savior taught (Matt. 15: 9-13).

THE POSITIVE SIDE

The New Testament description of a Christian can be summed up briefly. He is a new creature in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), having been born anew of water and the Spirit (John 3:5). He is dead to the world, having been crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20), and baptized into His death (Rom. 6:3-4). He is alive to God since he was "raised with Christ" (Col 2:12), and has put on the "new man" (Col. 3:9-10). Through faith and obedience he has become a citizen of the Kingdom (Col. 1:13), a member of Christ's body (1 Cor. 12:20). The Christian "abides in Christ," "walks by faith," "increases in the knowledge of God," is "ready unto every good work," endeavors to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing," and bears the "fruit of the Spirit" in his life.

A Christian is one who has put off the old man and put on the new man through faith in the Lord, repentance of sin, and baptism into Christ. ARE YOU A CHRISTIAN?

- Harold Hazelip

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- > "Success in marriage is more than finding the right person; it is being the right person!"
 - > "Some people's minds are like concrete: all mixed up and thoroughly set!"
 - > "The devil's best work is done many times by those who claim to love the Lord!"

- > "Some people ask for the truth and then become angry when one tells them!"
 - > "If it really doesn't matter how you live as a Christian, then why is it that most of the New Testament was written to Christians to show them how to live?"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*The Christian in the Home!*" (Text: Titus 2:1-10); Sunday evening: "*Love's Labor is Never Lost!*" (1 Cor. 15:58).