

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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The Unseen King

Concerning Jesus Christ, Peter said to early Christians: "Whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). To believe that Jesus Christ is the preeminent King, we today must rely on the evidence given in the Scriptures concerning Him. The prophecies concerning His Kingship, such as Daniel 2:44; 7:13, 14; His own claims of being a King, such as Matthew 21:1-11; John 18:36, 37; His works that demonstrate God's approval of His teachings (Acts 2:22; John 3:2; 20:30, 31); and the words of the inspired apostles attesting to His Kingship (Revelation 17:14; 19:11-16; Colossians 1:13); all of these evidences assure us that Jesus is indeed the authoritative King over all the earth.

Skeptical people today make the same mistake that Israel made in not recognizing and submitting to their King (1 Samuel 8:4-8). People today also want a visible king with visible glory and pomp, and are willing to sacrifice a proper relationship to God in order to have what they want. Their skepticism toward God makes them comfortable in rejecting Him while inconsistently holding fast to belief in other things that cannot be sensed physically with one or more of the five senses. Whom do you know that rejects the existence and influence of atoms, DNA, viruses, radio waves, or abstracts such as love, beauty, hatred, revulsion and jealousy? Why should one believe in these things and reject spiritual realities such as the soul, angels, the devil, and God? Abundant evidence of the existence of spiritual realities can be found in the Scriptures as well as in creation and human behavior. Have you ever seen Pluto and Jupiter? Do you believe they exist? Why? Have you ever considered the complexity of the intelligent design of living matter? Can you explain the origin of the capability of a human body to eat and digest raw plant life from leaves to roots and seeds? That source of origin is unseen, but its existence is evident.

Human beings have the capacity to understand abstract facts. This capacity includes understanding faith, greed, selfishness, philanthropy, egotism, humility, and self-sacrifice. We also have the capacity to believe in foolish superstitions or in the existence of God and His Son Jesus Christ, through Whom all things were made. What we choose to believe does not determine the reality of things. If we deny the existence of God, that

denial does not mean that He therefore does not exist. Evidence is the basis of all sensible faith, a basis that all sensible people use sometimes. People who believe in the future glorification of righteous people with an eternal King Who created us all are responding rationally to the evidence contained in a book that has stood the test of the most diligent scrutiny by critics and skeptics. Believers of the Bible are not crackpots, but reasonable people who are fully persuaded that there is one great King -- Jesus Christ, to Whom every knee must bow because He is our Creator and our Judge -- now invisible, but coming to be seen by all and to be glorified in His saints (Revelation 1:7; John 1:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10).

- Gilbert Alexander

Finding God in the Floodwaters

The floods last week in Kerrville, Texas not only took everyone by surprise, but at the time of this writing left around 100 people dead, including several young girls at summer camp. Tragically, it won't take long for people to use this incredibly sad event to blame God for perceived inattention and inactivity. Is this true and appropriate to do?

At the end of His six days of creation (Genesis 1:31), God surveyed all that He had made, and proclaimed it "very good." Flooding, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, and death were unknown. Mankind existed in a paradise of happiness and beauty where they shared an intimate and eternal relationship with their Maker (Genesis 3:8, 22).

But as a direct consequence of human sin, the earth was "cursed" (Genesis 3:17). This effectively means that the cause of everything that's wrong with the earth is ungodliness. Since God is love, and since love allows freedom of choice, God allows freedom of choice (cp. Joshua 24:15; John 5:39-40). God didn't create men and women to serve Him without free will on their part. Regrettably, mankind now reaps the consequences of the misuse of freedom of choice (i.e. the sin) of previous generations (Galatians 6:5-8).

Instead of blaming God because evil, pain, and suffering exist, we should turn to Him for strength, and let tragedies (of whatever nature) remind us that this world never was intended to be a final home (Hebrews 11:13-16). Our time here is temporary (James 4:14), and with God's help, we're able to overcome whatever tragedies come our way (Psalms 46:1-3; Romans 8:35-39; 1 Peter 5:10).

- Kyle Campbell, July 8, 2025

Making Bricks of Mud

Paul was set upon by a mob, then dragged from their hands by police. Falsely charged, he spent ca. 2 years in Jewish prisons, and was then sent to Rome to appear before Caesar. His traveling days ended, and threatened with death by savage beasts (2 Timothy 4:17), we could understand his being depressed and feeling "all is lost." Instead, he wrote to the Philippians, "the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel" (1:12-21). He could write, "I rejoice!"

Discounting his personal discomforts, he saw the good side of the bad — saw victory in defeat. I know his selflessness, his trust in the Lord, is the key. "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Paul had to learn this attitude; but I am impressed that he learned it so well it seems to have become a part of him. He "learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (4:11); and this kind of thinking spawned hope instead of despair. Throw mud at Paul and he made bricks of it, and built a house. Send him lemons, and he would enjoy the lemonade, and thank you for them. It is hard to defeat a person with such an attitude as that. We do not refer to an artificial Pollyannaish attitude, out of touch with reality. Paul sought relief from his "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:8) but when this was denied him he could "glory in my infirmities" making the most of them in defending his apostleship (vs. 7-11). He did not enjoy being forsaken by his brethren any more than do we, but he could "pray God that it may not be laid to their charge" (2 Timothy 4:16-17). He was confident that the Lord would save him.

Nor is this simply the SELF reliance, "indomitable ego" that is so highly recommended by psychotherapists. Human philosophies "plug in" to no higher source than man himself, and when society fails (as it does repeatedly) the individual despairs, sometimes ends it all in suicide. But the "look up" attitude of a true believer in God removes fear of the future, his soul is anchored (Hebrews 6:18-20), and he "shall not be moved." As one rancher friend of mine put it: "Things are going to pick up!"

- Robert F. Turner, via Plain Talk, March, 1981

God Calls, Man Believes!

When one starts to read the Bible from the very beginning, it is not very long before he sees that the only hope for man to have a good life and a blessed destiny is by having a personal relationship with God. One observes the hope residing in Adam, Eve, Abel, and Noah with his family. These relationships with God were all born by the same ingredient: faith! Truly, faith originates by hearing the words of God (Romans 10:17). Thankfully, our

gracious God revealed Himself to these people, graciously giving them His powerful words, thus planting the seed of faith in their hearts.

The Lord God spoke to Abraham, calling him out of his father's idolatrous house (Joshua 24:2) and into a land he had never seen. The words he received would not fill a book. They are recorded in Genesis 12:1-3. "So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him;" (Genesis 12:4), thus beginning his walk of faith which he maintained throughout his life (Hebrews 11:8-10). At times his faith faltered, but it continued to grow strong as the Lord sustained him through brief, but significant, revelations. He heard and obeyed God's words! "Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness." (Genesis 15:6).

Without doubt, Abraham was a righteous man of great faith! God made a covenant with this servant, and through him channeled blessings to a great nation and ultimately to all the nations of the earth. We regard Abraham as the father of the faithful, but not so much for the blessings God gave him, but for what he did as a servant of God and what he was willing to give in sacrifice to Him: his promised child (Genesis 22).

Will having Abraham's character and commitment do anything for me? Yes, it will help others to keep the way of the Lord through my teaching and influence (cf. Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Ephesians 6:1-4). Notice, "For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him." (Genesis 18:19). Abraham and Sarah were beyond the hope of having children, but they were given a promise by God. It was said that they "did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God," and that they became "fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform." (See Romans 4:18-21)

Notice that the promises to Abraham were realized because of the obedience of Abraham's faith (cf. Romans 1:5; 16:26). He kept "the way of the LORD." And he commanded his children and his household to do the same, preserving knowledge of God. This faithfulness started God's plan to bless the whole world through the coming of Christ. (See Galatians 3:26-29)

Is your faith like the faith of Abraham?

- Gary Smalley
(all Scripture references are NASB95)

- * "If we pray to catch the ear of man, we can't expect to reach the ear of God!"
 - * "Prayer does not deliver a man from some terrible situation; prayer enables a man to face and to master the situation!" - Barclay
 - * "One secret of effective prayer is prayer in secret!"
 - * "Kneeling keeps you in good standing with God!"
 - * "Public prayer is no evidence of piety. It is practiced by an abundance of hypocrites. But private prayer is a thing for which the hypocrite has no heart!" - Spurgeon
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What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)