

Newsbytes

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“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

A Light in a Dark Place

In Defense of the Faith

Monday, April 24, 2017

olivetreeviews.org

Pete Garcia

While one's prophetic persuasion is not a primary issue a person's salvation hinges upon, it does serve as an excellent weathervane of how a believer (or denomination) views all the other biblical doctrines.

The movie Fight Club had a very famous line in it; the first rule of fight club is, you don't talk about fight club. In a majority of churches today, the first rule of (pick a denomination) is, we don't talk about Bible prophecy. This was not always the case though. For the first three centuries, the early church was quite vocal about the end-times. It wasn't until men like Origen and Augustine came along and began to spiritualize, allegorize, and subsidize the literal interpretation of their own that the church began its descent into the theological abyss. Ignorance in this case is not bliss, but rather, spiritual blindness.

For the next 1,200 years, Christendom suffered in a theological dark age with the formation and domination of the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) over the then civilized world. Roman Catholicism taught that the kingdom was now and it was spiritual. They (the RCC) taught that they were the embodiment of that kingdom here on the earth. But these ideas did not originate from the Bible, but with Augustine. So if the kingdom was spiritual and now, then the earth needed a human representative of Christ...enter the Pope...the Vicar of Christ.

Progressive Illumination

John Nelson Darby and the Dispensationalist movement in the early 1800's did for Biblical exposition, what Wycliffe and Tyndale in the 1300-1500's did for its understanding. In their own ways, they each made the Bible readable, understandable, and contextual. Like Martin Luther centuries before, Darby did not add new doctrines into the Bible; he merely expounded upon what was already there by returning to a literal, grammatical, and historical interpretation. The Dispensationalist movement was the zenith of 2,000 years' worth of Christian thought, teachings, and biblical exposition which has since lasted for almost two centuries. This is the culmination of progressive illumination of which finds its ultimate conclusion sequentially at the Rapture, the Tribulation, the 2nd Coming of Christ, and THE Kingdom.

This might sound redundant to those who are not Dispensationalists, but consider this- Martin Luther did not invent salvation by grace through faith. He simply recognized and accepted what the Bible had to say about it. Likewise, Darby did not invent Dispensationalism. He simply recognized and clarified what was already laid out in both Testaments. We also know and accept that with the conclusion of the Revelation that the canon of Scripture was closed. In fact, the Bible is very clear on this; there would be no further divine revelation from anyone.

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which

are written in this book. Revelation 22:18-19 NKJV

So if Darby (or anyone else) were attempting to add new “revelation” into the Bible, we (Dispensationalists for the last 200 years) would have soundly rejected it. Just as there is a significant difference between salvation and sanctification, so too is the difference between revelation and illumination. The former is a one-time event, while the latter is a life-long event. One is something only God can do through His appointed, and the other is something God does for believers over time. Isaac Newton once said if I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.

We (I) have not come up with any unique new understanding; I simply expound upon what others before me have learned. They learned from those before them, and so on. This is the accumulation of knowledge. We take what the Bible says, particularly in the prophetic texts, and see how that matches up with what is going on around us. I do not need to hold a newspaper in one hand and the Bible in the other to compare...ultimately I believe, the newspapers will reflect what the Bible has already said about it.

This is progressive illumination. Progressive illumination speaks to the illumination (increased understanding) God gives to certain men and women in increasing measures, to understand the theological concepts, prophecies, historicity, archeology, and other areas as time progresses. This works similarly to the way that progressive revelation did in Scripture. God did not reveal everything to Adam, or to Noah, or to Abraham, or even to Moses. God revealed to each what was appropriate to them while building on previously revealed truths to those before them. Often, He also told them of things to come in what we call prophecy. In other words, God expounded upon previous truths to subsequent patriarchs, prophets, priests, and kings in Israel's history. This concluded the Old Testament with the coming of John the Baptist. Of him, Jesus said...

“Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he...For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. Matthew 11:11-14

Protestants find it just as hard today to accept that the Pope can speak ex-cathedra (aka...papal infallibility) concerning morals and doctrines, as it is for Dispensationalists to accept the erroneous teachings from Reformed and Covenant theological denominations that the Church is Israel, or vice-versa. After all, the Messiah came out of Israel, and the Church out of the Messiah. The Church could not exist until after the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. If the Church is Israel, then Christ did not build a new thing as He claimed He would do, but rather put new wine into an old wineskin. (Matthew 9:17, 16:18; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Hebrews 9:16-17)

Divide and Conquer

For the first time in around 1,800 years, the Church was finally embracing all of Scripture. At the peak of Christian learning and understanding, Satan began vigorously attempting to neutralize any spiritual growth by confusing and corrupting Christendom. Around the same time that Darby and the Plymouth Brethren were making gains, Satan was moving a man named Joseph Smith to establish the Latter Day Saints (Mormonism). They are a heterodox pseudo-Christian cult who add biblical text by claiming that it was a new revelation from the angel Moroni. In fact, there was an explosion of heretical and apostate groups all claiming new revelation. The Jehovah Witnesses, Christian-Science, Seventh Day Adventists, Transcendentalists, and Mormons to name a few.

The cults generally accept certain aspects of the biblical doctrine about Christ and his saving work on our behalf. However, they always deny one or more key aspects and introduce new twists of their own. Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, deny that Jesus rose physically from the grave; on their view Jesus' body was disintegrated by God and Jesus was recreated as a spirit creature. Christian Science denies that Jesus actually died; on their view his death was an illusion in the minds of the world who did not understand that only spirit is real. Mormons generally believe that Jesus' redemptive suffering took place in Gethsemane before his arrest, not on the cross. (Source)

Out of the seven billion people who currently populate the planet, most (around five billion or so) are not Christian in any form or fashion. (Islam, Hinduism, Shintoism, Buddhism, Paganism, Wiccans, Atheists, etc.)

Within the remaining 2 billion who do claim the Christian faith, probably less than half (around 500 million) even have an eschatological opinion. Out of that 500 million, these are divided around the four major eschatological views: Preterism, Amillennialism, Pre-Millennialism, and Post-Millennialism. While Pre-Millennialism (Pre-mill) is the dominant view out of this minority, even this camp is divided amongst Pre-Tribulation, Pre-Wrath, and Post-Tribulation believers concerning when they believe the Rapture of the Church will occur.

Roman Catholicism makes up around one billion adherents globally, and which (at least doctrinally speaking) are supposed to hold to an Amillennial eschatology. As a collective group, the RCC has all but abandoned the idea of a literal return of Jesus Christ. A Cardinal spokesman for the Vatican recently stated: "we just feel Jesus is not coming back by the looks of it."

Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. Revelation 3:3

Conclusion

Let's say hypothetically that the Bible doesn't mean what it really says. Let's also say that the Bible is not God's direct revelation of Himself to mankind. Rather, the Bible is just a collection of moral, semi-historical, oral traditions passed down to help us be better people. Do you know what happens next? Well, the Bible then becomes just another book. Christianity, just another religion. The evidence?

The 20th and 21st centuries have seen wars and rumors of wars, famines and pestilence, false prophets and teachers, terrorism, crime and violence, natural and unnatural disasters of every kind escalating in size, frequency, and intensity. All of these, if churches were to accept what Jesus literally said in His Olivet Discourse, were to be heralding signs that the end of the age was drawing to a close. (Matt. 24:3-14)

But looking around Christendom today, we know that this is not the case. Denomination after denomination is in varying stations of straying from the literal interpretation because the culture around us is in rapid decline. Most of the mainline denominations in the West today are struggling to both stay true to the word of God, and also not be offensive. This is not only impossible but impossibly designed as such. Our culture has embraced the debased nature over the Godly, and that broad middle-ground that once marked the blending of church and culture from generations past is quickly disappearing. The culture is forcing us to choose; do we bend with the declining cultural norms, or do we plant ourselves like trees and lean into the storm?

I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:8

These straying denominations are they who are falling by the wayside and littering the road paved with good intentions. The unintended consequence of abandoning the literal and supernatural qualities about Holy Scripture is that it quenches the Spirit in a body of both believers and even attendees. If people wanted a lesson on how to be good moral people, they could just stay home and watch Dr. Phil.

When the Spirit is quenched in a church, they begin to lose their audience because the messages cease to have both power and truth. When attendance starts to drop because people are no longer impacted by God's word, they (those churches) try to supplement it with entertainment and feel good messages. That may work for a season, but it's not fulfilling nor sustaining. No one can live exclusively off candy and sodas without some serious detriment to their health. While people may not like labels (because it paints them into fixed doctrinal positions) being clear about what doctrine guides your faith is important. As mentioned before, a prophetic or eschatological position serves as an excellent weathervane that shows what or how a person (or group) views other doctrinal positions.

And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. 1 Peter 1:19-21

Editor's Note: The article below is isn't my usual fare for Newzies but it's WELL worth your reading. I have thought this for some time and he nails it. – MD

I Begged God to Make Me Straight & He Never Answered. Here's Why.

4.21.17 Matt Moore

I knew I was attracted to the same sex when I was seven—in some capacity, anyway. I don't think it's physiologically possible to truly feel sexual attraction at such a young age. But I knew there was a drawing in me toward the same gender—and drawing that was more than what some would say is “natural” or “normal.”

As I grew up in a rural Louisiana town and teenage hormones began to surge throughout my body, my drawing toward the same gender intensified—sexually and emotionally. While I was definitely not engulfed in the life of a church during my adolescence, I was raised in close enough proximity to religious things—and religious people—that I knew the Bible referenced homosexuality as an abominable thing.

The Bible referenced to me as an abominable thing. That was my understanding anyway. And not only did the Bible paint people like me in the light of all that is grotesque, but so did the people around me. Family, friends, football coaches. Everyone. To be gay was to be gross. To be gay was to be wicked. To be gay was to be scum.

So I prayed. Oh. How. I. Prayed.

“God, make me normal.”

“God, make me straight.”

“God, make me like everyone else.”

But God didn't answer those prayers. Why?

I hear my experience repeated by others all the time. Just yesterday, actually. A Christian friend of mine was conversing with a guy who is living a homosexual lifestyle. He pleaded with her to believe that he had prayed for years for God to make him straight...to no avail. She was speechless. She didn't know how to respond.

“Matt, why didn't God answer his prayer? I mean, he prayed God's will? Why was there no answer?”

I'm not God, so I can't know all the reasons why He wouldn't have answered this guy's prayers to be made attracted to women. But, I do know what He's revealed in the Bible and I do know what I now, as a believer in Jesus, believe to be true of my own “unanswered prayers” experience.

Firstly, when I grew up pleading with God to make me straight, I had no real interest in God Himself. I wasn't praying for God to do this because I loved Him or wanted to live my life for Him. I was actually pretty unconcerned about Him, to be honest. I wanted God to take away my same-sex desires for my own benefit—so that I could fit in, be normal, be one of the guys, and even so that I could just have sex with girls like all of my friends were. So I obviously wasn't worried about being sexually moral. I just wanted to be sexually normal.

My desire to be made straight was all about me. I had no interest in being reconciled to God or having a relationship with Christ.

Which brings me to by second point. From what I see in the Bible, God is far more concerned with first fixing our hearts than he is with fixing other things in our lives. Same sex attraction included. Yes, it's true that God hates homosexuality. But more than that, He hates that our hearts are opposed to Him and that we long to live our lives separated from Him. God's foremost desire is that we would come to Him through Christ to receive new hearts that love and adore Him.

In fact, nothing can even begin to be done as far as the untangling of our sexualities until we receive new hearts that love and adore God. How do I know that? **Because Romans 1 says that the whole reason homosexual desire even exists is due to our rejection of God's loving rule and authority over our lives.**

Don't skip over this passage of Scripture I'm about to paste under here. It's vital that you read it.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 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, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

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." Romans 1:18-26.

Homosexual desire—and all other sinful desire—exists in the hearts of people because worship of God doesn't.

In Adam, we corporately rejected the good rule of God over our lives. And in each of our hearts, we have all individually rejected the good rule of God over our lives. And what has been the result? God has given us over to ourselves. He gave us up to our sinful desire, and has allowed us to revel and further deteriorate in it.

So why didn't God answer my prayer to rid me of my homosexual desires? Because homosexual desires were not my main problem. They were a problem, for sure. But the root of my problem was that I didn't love God or worship Him, and my homosexual desires were just fruit of that, so to speak. God's desire was to fix the root of my issues.

And in 2010, He did just that. He opened my eyes to see all that Jesus Christ is for those who will believe. I finally really saw Jesus as the Son of God who took on flesh and who in humility and incredible graciousness laid His life down for mine. He offered up His life to pay for my guilt in order that I could draw near to God and be given me a new heart; a new heart that loves, adores and worships the one true and incredibly good God.

Am I now straight? Am I now normal? Am I now free from same sex desires and attracted solely to women?

No, no and no.

My heart was changed instantaneously when I trusted in Christ and began to follow Him, but my mind was not. I now have a heart that genuinely loves God and desires to worship Him, but at the same time, I'm still utterly messed up and damaged by sin. The Lord is working in me and renewing my mind day by day, shaping me more and more into the reflection of Him that I was created to be. But it's been a process. And it will continue to be a process until I receive a new, perfect and sinless body in the age to come. When that day comes, the fullness of what Jesus purchased for me will be given to me: full freedom from every sinful thing that restrains my enjoyment and worship of God.

But even now, in this messed up damaged flesh, I have experienced some change in my sexuality over the past four years. I can't deny that. And the shifting in my sexual desires is a direct result of my grace-given love for God. I've grown in my disgust of homosexual relations because I see what a twisting and perversion it is of the image of God. And I've grown in my desire for women (specifically, one woman...I wrote about it here), and maybe even in my desire for marriage, because I see how a one man + one woman marital covenant so

beautifully reflects the image of God.

My growing desire for women is the overflow of a growing desire to see God's glory manifested in my life. Plain and simple. I'm not saying that I'm definitely going to get married one day. I might not. I may be single and celibate for the remainder of my sojourning in this world. But either way I will be fine and I will be joyful because my main problem has been fixed. I might not be "straight" or "normal," but I have a new heart, I have Jesus and I have the Father. And that's all I really need.

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Hamas: The New Charter That Isn't

by Bassam Tawil April 25, 2017 at 5:00 am

<https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org>

It is worthwhile to note that, contrary to what is being published in many media outlets, Hamas is NOT changing its Charter, which explicitly calls for the elimination of Israel.

The document goes on to clarify that even if Hamas accepts a Palestinian state on the pre-1967 lines, "this would not mean recognition of the Zionist entity or giving up any of the Palestinian rights."

Hamas and the PLO now have crucial common ground: sweet-talk the Western donors while laying stealthy plans to destroy Israel.

Yasser Arafat may have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, but his PLO officials and he really deserve the prize for the art of deception. For decades now, the PLO has spearheaded one of history's biggest scams, and now it seems that Hamas, the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood movement, is about to join the bandwagon.

According to unconfirmed reports in the Arab media, Hamas is about to publish a "political document" in which it "accepts" the "two-state solution." The purported document is already being hailed by some Western and Israeli analysts and Hamas apologists as a sign of the radical Islamic movement's march toward moderation and pragmatism.

It is worthwhile to note that, contrary to what is being published in many media outlets, Hamas is NOT changing its Charter, which explicitly calls for the elimination of Israel. The new Hamas document is intended for outside consumption and is directed to the ears and eyes of Americans and Europeans only. The original Hamas Charter in Arabic will remain in effect even after the new document is made public and seemingly official. In fact, it does not have to do that. The New Charter, while mouthing all sorts of human rights bromides over which Westerners and the media can be counted upon to swoon, such as:

"Hamas believes that the message of Islam came with morals of justice, truth, dignity and freedom, and is against injustice in all its shapes, and criminalizes the criminals whatever their sex, color, religion or nationality," and so on. (New Hamas Charter, Article 9).

It is, nevertheless, the same Old Hamas Charter as before. It does not even bother to renounce jihad as an acceptable means of "resistance." This is Hamas talking in code; pursuing "resistance" against Israel means: We plan to continue launching terror attacks against Israel.

"Hamas confirms that no peace in Palestine should be agreed on, based on injustice to the Palestinians or their land. Any arrangements based on that will not lead to peace, and the resistance

and Jihad will remain as a legal right, a project and an honor for all our nations' people." (New Hamas Charter, Article 21)

The PLO bluff began with the signing of the Oslo Accords with Israel in 1993, and reached its peak three years later, when PLO leaders managed to convince President Bill Clinton and the international community, including many Israelis, that they had changed the PLO Charter, which calls for the destruction of Israel. The truth, however, is a far cry from that.

Back in 1996, the PLO's parliament-in-exile, the Palestine National Council (PNC), held a session in Gaza City where its members decided to "entrust a legal committee with re-formulating the Palestinian Charter."

No one knows if the committee made any of the proposed changes. It is also unclear whether two-thirds of the PNC members (the required majority) actually voted in favor of changing the PLO Charter.

To this day, some Palestinians maintain that the charter was never officially amended or revoked -- and it certainly was not ratified -- and that the whole performance was a lie to mislead the international community and Israel into believing that the Palestinians had abandoned their dream of destroying Israel through "armed struggle."

The PLO Charter question, like the PLO's pledge to work towards a two-state solution, is murky. What is clear is that many in the international community swallowed the scam and began to believe that Arafat and his cohorts were finally leading their people toward real peace, beginning with recognition of Israel's right to exist.

A glance at PLO actions over the past two decades will show that this tiger has certainly not changed its stripes. Since the signing of the Oslo Accords, the PLO and its leaders, first Arafat and now Mahmoud Abbas, have consistently and stubbornly rejected all Israeli peace offers, some of which were exorbitantly generous.

The PLO and many other Palestinians have one thing in mind: to establish a Palestinian state alongside Israel in order to use it in the future as a launching pad from which to destroy Israel.

This desire to replace Israel with a Palestinian state is why no Palestinian leader will ever sign a document ending the conflict with Israel -- no matter what he is offered. No Palestinian leader is even authorized to pledge an end to Palestinian demands, even if he is given all the territories held by Israel since the 1967 Six Day War. Anyone could justifiably come along later -- after land had irreversibly changed hands -- and ask by what right Mahmoud Abbas, a leader in the twelfth year of a five-year term, had any legal authority to agree to anything. That question would -- and should -- invalidate any agreement overnight.

Abbas has shown for the past decade that his true goal is to undermine, delegitimize and isolate Israel; not to make peace with it. Abbas is prepared to accept a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (as well as East Jerusalem) only because he sees this solution as part of the "phased plan" to eliminate Israel. The PLO Charter, which was ostensibly changed, is still living in the minds and hearts of Abbas and many Palestinians.

We have been here before, but the minuet partner has changed.

After two decades, Hamas has finally woken up to the power of lies. Its leaders are mouthing just what the international community wishes to hear -- in exchange for legitimacy, recognition and money. Like

the PLO, Hamas has learned that in this instance, words are more important than actions. Utter the words: "We accept a Palestinian state on the 1967 boundaries" and you will find the world at your doorstep.

After two decades, Hamas has finally woken up to the power of lies. Like the PLO, Hamas has learned that in this instance, words are more important than actions. Pictured: Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas (right) shakes hands with Hamas's leader in Gaza, Ismail Haniyeh, during negotiations in 2007 for a short-lived unity government. (Image source: Palestinian Press Office)
The new document leaves no room for doubt that Hamas continues to seek the destruction of Israel despite its alleged acceptance of a Palestinian state on the pre-1967 lines. Hamas "will not give up any part of the land of Palestine regardless of the reasons, circumstances and pressure," the document reads, according to the Arab media reports. "Hamas rejects any alternative to the liberation of Palestine in its entirety, from the river to the sea."

The document goes on to clarify that even if Hamas accepts a Palestinian state on the pre-1967 lines, "this would not mean recognition of the Zionist entity or giving up any of the Palestinian rights." The new document repeats Hamas's commitment to the "armed struggle" against Israel:

"Resisting the occupation, with all methods and means, is a right that is guaranteed by international laws. At the heart of this is the armed resistance, which is considered the strategic choice to defend our people and restore their rights."

In yet more signs of Hamas's purported "moderation," the document re-emphasizes the movement's "absolute rejection" of the Oslo Accords, signed in 1993 between Israel and the PLO. In addition, the document affirms Hamas's commitment to work towards flooding Israel with millions of Palestinian "refugees" through the so-called right of return. In theory, Palestinians should be directed toward a State of Palestine: that is what it is purportedly being created for. "Palestine is an Arab and Islamic land; it is a blessed and sacred land that occupies a special place in the heart of all Arabs and Muslims," the new document stresses.

But, no, the Palestinians apparently want to have their marbles and Israel's marbles.

The talk about Hamas accepting the two-state solution is nothing but a bluff. Hamas itself is saying that it will accept a Palestinian state on the 1967-lines but without recognizing Israel's right to exist. In other words, Hamas is telling Israel, "Hand me a state on your doorstep so that I can better position myself to destroy you." With moderates like that, who needs extremists?

New document or not, Hamas will continue to launch rockets and perpetrate other terror attacks to kill Jews. The "pragmatism" of the "new Hamas" lies in its amplified ability to fool the West.

Not everyone, however, is fooled. Hamas is using old PLO tricks to achieve current ends: double talk, conflicting messages, some in English, some in Arabic. They fill their people's minds with anti-Israel venom while sending love notes to the international community. Hey, it worked for the PLO, so why not for Hamas?

Valentine's Day has come and gone, but Hamas and the PLO now have crucial common ground: sweet-talk the Western donors while laying stealthy plans to destroy Israel.