

Blue Ridge Brandmarks

“...I bear on my body the brandmarks of Jesus” - Gal. 6:17

Volume 5

May 1, 2011

Number 5

Believing Bible History

Earlier this year a Methodist church leader named Martin Thielen published a book entitled, “What’s the Least I can Believe and Still be a Christian?” In his book, the author attempts to reassure religious seekers that they can follow Jesus without necessarily having to accept troublesome Bible concepts like the creation account and the sinfulness of homosexual behavior. Jesus’ answer to the question, “What is the least I can believe?” is found in Matthew 4:4, “*Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.*”

The Bible has much for us to live on, including significant historical sections that tell the history of the early church, of the life of Christ, of the Israelite nation and the history of the beginning of all things. For many Christians, this history on its own is a wonderful demonstration of the wisdom, power and fascinating creativity of God and lends weight to the

authority of the rest of Scriptures. But for others, the historical sections of Scripture pose questions: Did these things actually happen? Are we expected to believe them? How do we know they are true? What use should we make of them?

The Testimony of Christ and Archaeology

The shortest and most sure route to faith in the historical records of the Bible is through faith in Jesus Christ. If we believe in Jesus, we get a belief in the Old Testament historical records “built-in”. Here is a sample of the otherwise difficult to believe historical records that Jesus accepted as fact:

- The creation of the world and of Adam and Eve (Mark 10:5-9)
- The flood (Matt. 24:37-39)
- The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Luke 17:28-29)
- Jonah and the great fish (Matt.

Cont. on Page 2 ►

Bible History - from Page 1 ►

12:39-40)

Since God's word is true, we would expect it to agree with all other known facts, and when it comes to the Bible's historical records, this is certainly the case. The Bible discusses many people, places, events and nations, as well as their relationships with each other, as part of its historical narrative. In many cases, the Bible is the only source of information about these historical details, and time after time skeptics have pointed to a detail found only in the Bible as evidence that the Bible is false and full of inventions.

- Similar statements could be made regarding the Bible's reports of writing at the time of Moses, wine in Egypt, Belshazzar in Babylon, and the existence of the whole Hittite nation.

More recent discoveries include inscriptions mentioning the house of David and Pontius Pilate, as well as clay seal imprints that appear to be ones actually made by the Bible characters Baruch (Jer. 36:4) and Seriah (Jer. 51:59) while sealing documents [1].

Understanding History as History

Sometimes Bible readers fail to make a proper distinction between literal and figurative sections of Scripture. For example, attempting to interpret a parable

THE SAME SKILLS WE USE TO UNDERSTAND A NEWSPAPER WILL HELP US DETERMINE WHAT IS INTENDED LITERALLY AND FIGURATIVELY IN GOD'S WORD

Yet time after time, later archaeological findings have confirmed that the Bible was right all along. Here are some examples, as reported by Wayne Jackson's book "Biblical Studies in the Light of Archaeology":

- King Sargon of Assyria (Isa. 20:1) was unknown to history outside of the Bible until 1843.
- The legal proceedings surrounding Abraham's purchase of the cave of Machpelah seemed too advanced for their time until discoveries made in 1906.

as history, or history as a parable will lead to confusion and misunderstanding. Some attempt to interpret everything literally, even the apocalyptic imagery of the book of Revelation. But Jesus told His disciples that parts of His teachings were plain and other parts were figurative (John 16:25). The same is true with the rest of Scripture. Thankfully, the same skills that we use to read and understand a newspaper will help us determine what is intended literally and what is intended figuratively in God's word.

On the other side of the coin, some readers of Scripture seem bent on turning plain statements of fact into allegories of deep symbolism only vaguely related to

Bible History - from Page 2 ►

the text. A classic example of this is near the end of Augustine's Confessions, where he converts the creation account into an extended allegory. In his word picture, for example, the firmament becomes the Scriptures, the waters above the firmament are heavenly beings praising God, and the waters below the firmament are humanity. To be fair, Augustine did write a book on the literal meaning of Genesis, but even there, the days of creation are categories of things

things that those without faith cannot know. In the words of Hebrews 11:1, we have "*the evidence of things that are not seen*". There is so much revealed which cannot be known any other way, and which so directly and vitally concerns us regarding who we are and what our purpose is as human beings, that the man or woman of faith who acts upon what they know from Scripture has a similar advantage to one who engages in insider trading on the stock market. In the case of Scripture, however, the risks and rewards are eternal, and the "insider"

THE MAN OF FAITH WHO ACTS ON WHAT HE KNOWS FROM SCRIPTURE IS LIKE AN INSIDE TRADER ON THE STOCK MARKET

God created, rather than an indication of when they were made or how long it took to make them [2]. Many modern interpreters don't do much better.

In reality, the record of creation week is Biblical history, reported by the only eye-witnesses present, namely the Godhead, to humanity. The text makes this clear in Genesis 2:4: "*This is the account [history or generations] of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made heaven and earth.*" Eleven times in Genesis, this "history" claim is made for the records that are being reported (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 36:9; 37:2). Is there any question that Genesis is intended to be understood as history?

The Advantage of Belief

When we accept the history God has revealed in Scripture as history, we gain distinct advantages. Primarily, we know

knowledge is available to everyone, but only by the means of faith.

"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;" (Psalms 19:7). May you and I have our hearts and minds filled with the evidence of things not seen, and our lives filled with actions based upon it!

References:

1. Schoville, Keith N., "Top Ten Archaeological Discoveries of the 20th Century Relating to the Biblical World" 15 April 2011
<<http://biblicalstudies.info/top10/schoville.htm>>.
2. Augustine of Hippo. The Literal Meaning of Genesis. Ed. John H. Taylor, The Newman Press, 1982. pg. 9.

◀Brent Paschall▶

MAY 2011 DUTY ROSTER

Weekday	SUN	WED	SUN	WED	SUN	WED	SUN	WED	SUN
Date	5/1	5/4	5/8	5/11	5/15	5/18	5/22	5/25	5/29
Opening Prayer	Matt M.		Ed M.		David T.		Eric B.		Randy F.
Morning Message	John M.		Eric B.		Jimmy F.		Charlie K.		Leo R.
Announcements	Jimmy F.	Matt M.	Leo R.	Alan M.	John M.	Jonathan L.	Randy F.	Randy F.	David T.
Leading Songs	Alan M.	Larry P.	Brad F.	Leo R.	Eric B.	Eric B.	David T.	Alan M.	Larry P.
First Prayer	Randy F.	David T.	David T.	Don H.	Ed M.	Randy F.	Jerry D.	Eric B.	Brad F.
Lead at Lord's Table & Contribution	Larry P.		Bill A.		Don H.		John M.		Jimmy F.
Assist	Charlie K.		Jeremy P.		Brad F.		Jeremy P.		Ed M.
Assist	Jerry D.		Don H.		Bill A.		Kevin H.		Matt M.
Assist	Cody M.		John M.		Jonathan L.		Bill A.		James M.
Read Scripture	Leo R.		Kevin H.		Jerry D.		Brad F.		Cody M.
Preaching	Brent P.		Brent P.		Brent P.		Brent P.		Brent P.
Wed. Exhortation		John M.		Jimmy F.		Alan M.		Larry P.	
Closing Prayer	James M.	James M.	Jerry D.	Jonathan L.	James M.	Ed M.	Matt M.	Jimmy F.	Alan M.

ALL ARE WELCOME!

Sunday

9:15 - Morning Message

10:00 - Bible classes for all ages

11:00 - Worship

Wednesday

7:30 - Bible Classes for all ages

Elders:

Jim Fields, Alan Moeller & Leo Rodrigue

Deacons:

Eric Bridge & John Malloy

Evangelist:

Brent Paschall

Read articles, sermons and download
class material at

www.blueridgecoc.org

Blue Ridge Church of Christ
929 Indiana Ave NE
Roanoke, VA 24012