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*'To Whom Shall He Speak Knowledge? And whom shall He make to understand doctrine...?'*

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TA Ministries is a non-denominational faith ministry, *teaching, informing and equipping* the church.

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## Editors Comments

'Apostasy' was once a term that many spoke of and understood it to be a continual danger to the church, (2Thes.2:3; 1Tim.4:1-3; 2Pet.3:17). However, today many Christians are actually ignorant of this foretold *falling away* from the faith ('*apostasia*' - 2Thess.2:3) as being a *current event*. Alarming, the voices against the apostasy of this day are dwindling dramatically.

*Back in the 80's* I distinctly remember many church leaders warning of the *New Age Movement*. Now you don't hear much about this at all. Why? Because it is now *in* the church and people hardly know it! Many of it's heresies have entered through such fads as the '*Church Growth*' and '*Emergent*' movements. Today the church at large has a *tolerance* of Eastern religious practices and their philosophies.

*Then came* the 'Toronto Blessing' in the nineties, which at first was resisted even by Pentecostal leaders, yet was eventually accepted and announced as God doing a '*new thing*'. When this ministry opposed the phenomena we were warned by those leaders that we were 'resisting' the Holy Spirit and even in danger of 'blaspheming' Him. But these movements passed and left behind much devastation in many churches. I do not know of any church that adopted this movement that did not in the end have division and damaged people. Our files in this ministry are crammed with documentation on this.

*Then came* the Church Growth movement with its gurus such as Bill Hybels and Rick Warren. A few highly prominent church leaders warned of this movement's depreciation of doctrine and scripture. Most 'discernment' ministries warned of the many resulting false 'conversions'. Recently, Bill Hybels finally admitted to just that. Their own report revealed that the millions of dollars spent on various aspects of their ministry were *not producing true believers*.

As mentioned, we now have the 'Emergent church' movement bringing its denial of the inspiration and inerrancy of scripture in addition to it's post modernist view negating any of the absolutes in scripture. They despise the view that there is a *correct* interpretation of scripture and teach that we must change our understanding of what exactly 'church' is. The voices against this movement are now mostly extinguished.

These movements that take the church off track are ultimately designed to attack one central issue - 'Sola Scriptura' - the *all sufficiency* of scripture for doctrine, faith and practice. Something is starkly wrong here? Initially, many false movements are strenuously rejected by the many. Yet as they take on more subtle forms the 'shepherds' lower the strength of their opposition.

Christianity is not what it was 150 years ago - it has changed with the introduction of such extra-Biblical hybrids. Each heresy 'leavens the whole lump' and *reduces* the tenets of Biblical Christianity, thus weakening the Gospel. Any movement that is shallow in, or has a low view of, doctrine, must be regarded as dangerous to the Faith. Discernment is only maintained by being immersed in scripture and defending sound doctrine.

We are rushing toward those days that Jesus warned us of: '*...when the Son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?*' (Lk.18:8).

We urge our readers to be '*steadfast in the faith*'! (1Pet.5:9).

**Terry Arnold**

## Visions, Dreams...and 'Near-Death' Experiences

In 1958 Word Faith preacher, **Kenneth Hagin**, claimed that 'Jesus' appeared to him with an angel standing three feet behind him. This 'jesus' said '*this is your angel...yes, your angel, and if you respond to him, he will appear to you as I will at times, and he will give you guidance and direction concerning the things of life...*' (Kenneth Hagin, '*I Believe in Visions*', P.93).

The modern phenomena of seeing angels and Jesus was then spurred along in the 1970's by Pentecostal **Jesse Du Plantis**, who had many visions and 'prophecies' from God, Jesus or angels. In one such meeting with an angel he claimed to be in a restaurant with friends having a meal, when God indicated to him that he was to immediately go to his room. There he heard the sound of a mighty rushing wind and was soon in a machine being transported with an angelic being. On arrival (why does God need a machine to transport angels and people to Heaven?) he saw Abraham, David and Paul and gave a description of the particular *physical* characteristics of each of the three.

Yet, this differs remarkably from scripture in that Duplantis sees the bodies of the three *before* the resurrection of the body. When the apostle John saw the martyrs in Revelation 20 he saw their *souls* and not their bodies.

The angel then showed De Plantis his heavenly 'house' which had similar furniture to his own house back home. He also saw Jesus 'preach'. The question could well be asked: why is Jesus preaching in an environment where we shall know Him fully (1Cor.13:12)? Duplantis asked 'Where is the Holy Spirit?' and was told 'Down on earth'...But is not the Holy Spirit omnipresent?

Then there was the incident where an angel said something that was wrong. So Jesse *punches* the angel who stumbles backwards! Are we to believe that men are stronger than angels and that this would be possible? *The problem with such tales is that they raise more questions than answers!*

Duplantis also believed Jesus gave him a special commission to preach that the Lord is coming soon. But does not the Bible already teach this?

Despite such wild stories, many churches had Jesse Du Plantis as keynote speaker in the 1990's and even distributed his videos of his unscriptural and extra-biblical tales.

In 1973, **Betty J. Eadie** supposedly 'died' and went to heaven. Nearly twenty years later, she published a book about her experience titled '*Embraced by the Light*' which became a New York Times best seller. Eadie records in graphic detail her journey to heaven and back. After complications from a hysterectomy operation, she was suddenly drawn out of her supposedly dead body and toward a great light in the distance. There she encountered the figure of a man bathed in brilliant light reaching out to her with pure, unconditional love. '*There was no questioning who he was...I knew that he was my Saviour, and friend, and God. He was Jesus Christ.*' This figure gave her power to understand the 'mysteries of the universe' including such things as the belief that *all the world's religions eventually lead to God.*

In 1987 **Kenneth Copeland** gave a false prophecy 'from Jesus Christ' in which this 'jesus' promised that new and dramatic angelic manifestations would increase in the church and that many Christians would be transported to other

countries in an instant of time to preach a message and then be transported back into their kitchens just as suddenly.

Such unbiblical visions, dreams and prophecies flooded the shelves of Christian bookstores *as fact* in the late 20th century. They have made many writers very wealthy.

In the early nineties, as a Pentecostal, I confess for a time to being swayed by some of these publications, until a close friend challenged me to test one book that I had taken a particular interest in. It was titled '*A Divine Revelation of Hell*' by **Mary Baxter**. Mary claimed that her spirit left her body and was taken by Jesus on a personal tour of Hell over a period of thirty nights, and then over an additional ten nights she was taken to Heaven. On the way through Hell she describes the terrifyingly evil creatures she saw and then the people in the fires of Hell who had rotting pieces of flesh hanging off their skeletons.

On investigation, I found several areas of the book that flatly contradicted scripture. Mary sees skeletons in Hell. Yet, our body remains on earth when we die, and it will decay (Acts 13:36). Only the soul and spirit of a person goes to either Heaven or Hell. The apostle Paul speaks of being *absent from the body* from the moment of death, (2Cor.5:6-8; Phil.1:22-24). The resurrection body will not suffer decay, (1Cor.15:42-44). In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man is in Hell where he is *not consumed* by the flames, (Lk.16:22). The claim that there will be skeletons with rotting flesh in Hell is simply false!

Mary Baxter makes the claim that the object of Jesus taking her on a guided tour of Hell and of her writing the book is so that people will be warned about Hell and turn to Christ. But this again contradicts Christ himself in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. There the rich man argues for his brothers who are still on earth to be warned; but *Christ rejects this argument* and says: '*If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead*', (Lk.16:31).

What is wrong with that old 'faith once delivered' - the Word of God? Do we need these supernatural tales? Can we not still long for, and be excited about, the promise of 'the streets of gold', even if it only comes from all that is written in the Bible? Is it not enough that we have descriptions of the New Jerusalem as a place without tears, death, sorrow, or pain? The glory of God will shine there; a place beyond adequate human description?

The problem with these contemporary visions, dreams and near-death experiences is that by their nature *they undermine the authority of Scripture!*

The Bible teaches that before the closing of the canon of scripture that '*God spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets*' and that was often in *dreams and revelations*; **BUT** '*in these last days [has] spoken unto us by his Son...*' (Heb.1:1,2). The tense of '*has spoken*' indicates a full and final revelation!

*Everything we need to know about Heaven and Hell before His return is found in the Bible!* Until then we are warned: '*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto FABLES*', (2Tim.4:3-4).

**Terry Arnold**

## Book Review - 'The Truth War'

John MacArthur has recently published a book titled 'The Truth War' (224 pages). The subtitle 'Fighting for Certainty in an Age of Deception' is a good summary of what the church is facing today and the solution.

This book is a serious call to arms against false teachers who are infiltrating the church today. Based loosely on Jude 3-4, MacArthur demonstrates the urgent need 'to earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints' (Jude 3).

MacArthur has been one of the most public voices warning that the evangelical movement today is in deep trouble. The war for truth is hotting up like never before with the rise of the Church Growth 'movement' and now the 'Emergent Church'. Biblical illiteracy and a willingness to tolerate heresy has allowed these false intrusions to flourish. Many of the quotes from the great champions of Biblical truth, such as Charles Spurgeon, are simply prophetic!

In this book MacArthur takes a somewhat scatter-gun approach but well reveals the evils of the thinking of this post modernist age. It is this philosophy and thinking that

has caused truth and 'absolutes' to be diminished. The book discusses the *Emergent Church* movement, John Armstrong's theological flip-flop, the dangers of both 'postmodernism', ancient and current Gnosticism, the 'Prayer of Jabez', the 'Purpose-Driven Life' and the need for proper hermeneutics. Additionally, there are a couple of expositional chapters on the epistle of Jude and a quick run through the heresies of ancient church history. There is also some good information on 'Discernment' in an appendix.

This book will be an encouragement to those who love truth and who are not afraid of error being exposed. It will give good teaching on how to survive in an age of great apostasy. There are valuable lessons learned from a look at history. Anyone preaching, teaching or wanting to know the current state of the church would do well to read this book and be encouraged to hold to the line of truth and the inspiration of scripture. (Available from this ministry \$24.90 - this including postage)

Terry Arnold

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## Rome's 'Olympics'?

In just under 10 weeks Sydney Australia will be hosting what is being described as the largest single event in the city's history. 'Bigger than the Olympics' according to Vatican publicists. Yes, it's Rome's 'World Youth Day 08' during which Roman Catholics and undiscerning Protestants have been invited to 'make a pilgrimage in faith, [to] meet and experience the love of God'.

'WYD08' Marks the first visit to Australia for Pope Benedict XVI and he is being warmly welcomed to what the official website claims is the 'Great South Land of the Holy Spirit'. Be prepared for some shocking scenes as many of our 'leaders' flock to be a part of this apostate extravaganza.

Already several 'Christian' luminaries have waxed lyrical over what they see as an incredible opportunity for evangelism that will bring about some sort of spiritual awakening in the Australian community. It may well do that of course - but to imagine that it has anything to do with Biblical Christianity would be to misjudge the rationale back of this enterprise.

Once head of Sydney's Wesley Mission and now a State Parliamentarian, the Reverend Doctor Gordon Moyes, recently spoke to the State Legislature concerning the World Youth Day Amendment Bill 2007 and in so doing spoke these horrifying words: '*The young people will have an opportunity to rediscover their baptismal calling and the centrality of the sacraments of the Eucharist and reconciliation, and so discover a new apostolic zeal to witness more fully the Gospel in the modern world. World Youth Day is primarily an opportunity for evangelisation - to receive the Holy Spirit and be witnesses to the world; to draw young people to a deep, life changing experience of God. Drawing on my expertise at Wesley Mission, I fully support the NSW Government's aim to mobilise resources for WYD, to build bridges between the community, and to invite all youth from different Christian and non-Christian denominations to play an active role in this great event, and bridge the gap in our society. I thank the NSW Government for introducing the World Youth Day*

*Amendment Bill 2007 and I commend the Legislation to the House.*

Not to be outdone, Sydney Anglican Archbishop Peter Jensen told his Synod late last year; '*In 2008, World Roman Catholic Youth Day will raise the level of awareness of Jesus in the community and increase the sense of interest in him, it's going to be very big, like the Olympics. We must be prepared to build on that momentum...My vision is to challenge the leadership of the churches to build bridges into the community, trusting in the word of God to be effective, making the sacrifices needed to do this and shaking the city so that it will never be the same again.*'

This is the tip of the iceberg, the mere beginning of a vast and public revelation of the apostasy present amongst Australia's Protestant leaders. As the days wind down toward the arrival of the Pontiff our hearts will often despair as the men who head Australia's Mainline, Evangelical, Pentecostal and Reformed denominations jostle for a place of recognition amongst Rome's Cardinals and priests as they sacrifice Christ afresh each day!

Millions of taxpayer's money have been allocated to cover the expenses and losses of the Randwick horse racing fraternity who were pressured into turning their racecourse over to the Vatican for the dreadful Mass to be held there on the final day. Sydneysiders have been urged to 'take the week off' to alleviate traffic congestion and the harbour bridge is to be closed to allow 'pilgrims' to walk to the festivities.

What can possibly have occurred for these men to have so taken leave of their theological senses? The only conclusion to be drawn is that to them the Reformation was an historical blunder, the Inquisition a chimera, and that the Trentine anathemas [curses] put upon the gospel they purport to believe, have at some time been declared null and void? Yet they have not. Vatican II affirmed them.

The founding fathers of Methodism and Anglicanism once viewed Rome as antichrist and the successive pope's as 'men of sin'. How things have changed?

Mike Claydon apostasyalert@hotmail.net.au

## **Benny Hinn**

MinistryWatch.com. is an organisation that seeks to hold Christian organisations in the US to high standards of financial transparency. The following is what their report alleges about Benny Hinn:

- Hinn's salary is somewhere between half a million and a million dollars per year (+ huge book royalties)

- Personal perks for Hinn, family and his entourage include a \$10 million seaside mansion; a private jet with annual operating costs of about \$1.5 million; a Mercedes SUV and convertible, each valued at about \$80,000

- What the church termed 'layovers' between crusades included hotel bills ranging from \$900 per night to royal suites that cost almost \$3,000 for one night's stay. Layover locations included Hawaii, Cancun, London, Milan and other exotic locations.

- Beverly Hills shopping sprees: Receipts showing Hinn's daughter receiving \$1,300 in petty cash; her boyfriend getting \$2,550 for babysitting; \$23,000 in cash dispersed to Hinn and his wife; and \$25,000 in cash for expenses for a crusade - 30 minutes away from Hinn's home.

Hinn continues to espouse the theologically-suspect self-serving Word-of-Faith or 'prosperity' gospel. Jesus and his followers never amassed personal wealth through their ministry and instead lived a clearly sacrificial life.

Television producer Nathan Daniel, a former Benny Hinn employee who was hired to improve Hinn's public image, instead reported to NBC that there was never one complete record that would suit the criteria for documented miracle healing. (From 'Apostasy Alert')

**Editors comment: The church at large has allowed this charlatan to remain in ministry. The secular media has exposed him many times for outright lying and trickery, yet churches, including the Assemblies of God in Australia, has had him as their conference speaker! If there were enough public outcry from more churches, Hinn's ministry would not be as well accepted by the millions that have adopted him as their spiritual advisor. He has proclaimed several documented false prophecies; many years ago his top 5 'miracles' were examined and all found to be non-miraculous or fraudulent. Yet, he makes merchandise of the saints, exactly as the scriptures warn, (2Pet.2:3).**

## **Anglicans and Roman Catholics - Covenant**

(Catholic News, 30 January 2008): *'Catholic and Anglican relations in NSW are warming up with the impending signing of a formal covenant in a step towards 'healing' between the two denominations. Christianity Today reports Anglican Archbishop of Newcastle Dr Brian Farran...who said the covenant was an indication of shared 'common values'...It will involve holding an annual ecumenical service of worship, an annual joint clergy day, annual exchange of pulpits and examining the possibilities of sharing church planning...The covenant will be signed on April 2 in the Newcastle [Australia] Anglican Cathedral'*.

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## **Church 'Millionaires Success Conference'**

The 'Metro Church' on the Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia is hosting a 'Millionaires Success Conference'. The convention features two speakers. One, a Dani Johnstone, is the Owner/Director of an Institute of Fitness and 'was placed 20th on Australia's Young Rich List (Business Review Weekly magazine)'. She says: *'Realize that God's laws are solid. He has a law for promotion, for success, and for wealth. The problem is that when we don't know these laws, we sit around and blame everybody that we don't have finances. We blame our boss for not promoting us instead of learning God's laws of promotion...The people who succeed are those who have learned those laws...God has called you to succeed...learn from His Word what He says about money, success, happiness, and joy for you and your family.'* Her book 'Spirit-Driven Success' is 'helping God's people get out of debt and achieve financial freedom'.

The second speaker is prized as 'a successful international businessman' who 'specialises in tax incentive programs, and produced and released the first of a series of privately issued gold and silver coins, minted by Perth Mint Australia'.

**Editors comment: No mention is made of Jesus Christ - only how to become wealthy. The 'prosperity Gospel' is 'another gospel', not known in 'the faith once delivered'; it is a 20th century invention by the Pentecostal church. God curses anyone who preaches another gospel, (1Cor.11:4; Gal.1:6-9). This church is one of so many churches that have truly become secular in our day!**

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## **Global Warming?**

*'Recent freezing conditions throughout much of the world have sent Al Gore and his associate fraudsters into a massive panic...in the past twelve months the planet has experienced an overall temperature drop of a very significant 0.63°C. In January, average global temperatures slipped to 0.044°C below the long-term (1979-98) average.*

*China is now battling its coldest winter in 100 years. ..Freezing weather has killed scores of people. Tajikistan has had its coldest winter in at least 50 years, with temperatures dropping to -22°C in the capital, Dushanbe...Heavy snowfall and frozen rivers have led to damage of water and hydroelectric supply systems. Mountainous villages are in isolation, and severe food shortages are leading to starvation.*

*In one of the worst cold snaps to have ever struck Iran, the nation has suffered turmoil with people freezing to death in their cars, numerous towns have suffered cuts in*

*gas supplies, and all schools and government offices were forced to close in the capital, Tehran. The dunes of the Kavir-e Lut desert in southwestern Iran were covered in a dusting of snow for the first time in living memory...The lowest temperature overnight was minus 24°C in Shahre Kord in western Iran.*

*Mumbai, India, experienced its coldest day in 46 years when the temperature dropped to 8.5 degrees Celsius.*

*In May of 2007, researchers Stephen McIntyre and Douglas Keenan exposed the IPCC to be using fraudulent historical temperature records. They showed Phil Jones, Director of the Climate Research Unit at the University of East Anglia, U.K., and co-author Wei-Chyung Wang, Professor at the State University of New York in Albany, U.S.A, had knowingly falsified data from the 84 Chinese temperature stations used in their study'.*

(From 'Apostasy Alert')

## Some thoughts on ‘Hermeneutics’

In a previous issue titled ‘How To ‘Study’ The Bible’, (*Diakrisis (Australia)*/Sept/Oct/2006) we dealt with the basics of ‘Hermeneutics’, especially in the form of ‘word studies’. The word ‘Hermeneutics’ refers to the science and art of the principles of interpretation. Interpretation is simply ‘*rightly dividing the word of God*’, (2Tim.2:15). To do this accurately involves ‘*study*’ and being a ‘*workman*’, (2Tim.2:15). This leads to sound ‘*exegesis*’ - the explanation of what the Biblical author originally meant. It is from such that we gain ‘*application*’ for our daily lives.

### **The Problem:**

Sadly, today many want to cut short the ‘hard yards’ involved in rightly dividing the word, exegeting and study, and simply move straight to ‘what does the Holy Spirit have for ME’. The ‘what it means for me’ is the character of ‘*devotional*’ studies that many Christians admit they engage in for a few minutes each day. Most of the ‘*study*’ and the ‘*work*’ is usually done by the author of the ‘*devotional*’! Although there is nothing wrong with ‘*devotionals*’ in and of themselves as a secondary source of reading, today it is fast *replacing* personal, serious Bible *reading* and *study*.

Most Christians today do not know how to ‘*study*’ and ‘*interpret*’ a passage of Scripture. This is why it is increasingly common to see verses wrenched out of their context and applied to some theological position which actually may not be present in the verse at all.

The fact that the biblical languages were couched in cultures that are at times quite different to our modern understanding, should cause us to research the text to ascertain what is the *original* meaning of the authors words within the culture and the language of the day. With ‘*difficult*’ texts, this can often be a demanding process.

We are living in a ‘*post modern*’ age and a fast food mentality at that. This is causing many Christians to think that they can ‘*study*’ by simply reading the surface of the text. That may suffice for some passages but for many more passages, deeper research is needed. Basic ‘*Hermeneutics*’ can, and should be, taught at the level of the local church! Asking the ‘*who*’, ‘*what*’, ‘*where*’ and ‘*why*’ of the text is one thing, but it is important to use the tools and resources to dig out as much information as is necessary to answer these vital questions. It behoves Christians to have at least a concise ‘*library*’ of these ‘*tools*’. All of these can now be easily accessed on computer and are often free of charge!

Many will here protest against ‘*intellectualism*’. But this is too often a strawman argument against real ‘*study*’. If this studious approach to scripture is ‘*intellectualism*’ then forget any doctrinal studies; forget the theological writings and works of Jonathan Edwards, Spurgeon, Luther, Whitefield, the Puritans and the many other ‘*intellectuals*’ who ‘*laboured in the word and doctrine*’, (1Tim.5:17). In the meantime, Christians are fast becoming fodder for the ear-tickling TV evangelists, the faith healers and the sickly Arminian waffling of the ‘*God loves you*’ gospel. If we are not reading our Bibles and ‘*studying*’ as ‘*workmen*’, then how are we ever going to discern the signs of the times?

I know many Christians who have never read their Bibles from cover to cover. How can one possibly have a full orb view of God’s salvation plan for mankind or have anything but a truncated Gospel, if we have not read the Old

Testament and its very *foundations* for Christ and the Gospel? Many heresies and extremes can often be traced back to such a lack of studying the Bible *as a whole*.

### **‘Context, Context!’:**

One of the first and most important principles in interpretation is ‘*context*’. Two areas must be considered here: the historical context and the context of the text itself. ‘*Out of context*’ teaching today is rampant. How often do we hear such scriptures as Joshua 24:15 (‘*choose you this day whom you will serve*’) applied to evangelism, when the context clearly is referring to Israelite *believers* who had turned to idolatry? The context is not salvation at all, but *idolatry* as the verses to follow show clearly!

How often do we hear Revelation 3:20 (‘*I stand at the door, and knock*’) used for the pleadings of the Lord to the unsaved, when in fact it is a warning to a *church*! The misuse here in these scriptures would be corrected if the hermeneutical question ‘*who is the passage speaking to*’ was asked and answered correctly.

Understanding the context may also involve another important principle - *scripture interprets scripture*. For example, any doctrine of the ‘*Perseverance of the Saints*’ must be proved by first studying *all* the passages that speak about this topic and then at least exegeting the few that appear to ‘*contradict*’ it. We must allow the obvious and clear scriptures to speak to the not so clear (eg. Hebrews 6).\* No doctrine can be formed from just one passage. For example, the Mormons teach a ‘*Baptism for the dead*’ from 1Corinthians 15:29 when so many other passages would speak against baptism for the deceased.

It is helpful to group and summarise the various contexts of any topic. This means searching out the word or topic as used throughout scripture - this is time consuming but immensely rewarding in the end! We in this ministry regularly do this on important topics and then file, store and improve the information as it comes up for future study.

*Grammar* is also important in interpretation. Grammar describes the laws of language that tie the parts together in the text. *Semantics* looks at the meaning of individual words as each functions in the sentence. *Syntax* studies the configuration of the sentence units and the way the message as a whole can speak in differing cultural contexts.

But overall the reader must allow the *context* to make the final grammatical decision. In fact, too much time can be spent in researching the grammar, Greek and cultural aspects, instead of the actual context itself. Some words such as ‘*church*’ (‘*ekklesia*’) may have differing meanings *dependent on the various contexts*. The word ‘*ekklesia*’ may be interpreted variously as an ‘*assembly*’, ‘*the body of Christ*’, a ‘*community*’ of believers, or as ‘*the bride of Christ*’...

Sometimes we can miss the ‘*whole*’ of the context by focusing too much on the ‘*parts*’. The issue of meat offered to idols in 1Corinthians 8-10 is linked to the principle of the ‘*stumbling block*’ (8:7-13); and foot washing is linked to *servanthood*. The veils and headcovering in 1Corinthians 11 is linked to the *headship* of a woman under a man who is under Christ.

By separating the cultural practice of the command from the principle, we can reapply it today - for example, greeting

one another with Christian love and commitment, but not necessarily with a 'holy kiss', (Rom.16:16; 1Cor.16:20...).

However, some contexts are not culturally relevant as such. Homosexuality is an absolute and a moral issue. There are simply no options today that would limit the absolute of this word. So it is not a culturally-relative matter.

*Context is very important.* An example of where this is so is in the word 'sarx, ('flesh'), a word often translated literally in some versions. However, this one word can be used in many different ways: Matthew 24:22, '**no flesh be saved**' (no person); John 1:14, '**the Word was made flesh**' (became a human being); Romans 9:8, '**children of the flesh**' (children of natural birth); Hebrews 5:7, '**days of his flesh**' (his earthly life), Romans 8:13, '**live after the flesh**' (sinful nature); Jude 7, '**going after strange flesh**' (sexual immorality). The English word *flesh* cannot adequately express all these divergent uses. *The surrounding context often determines the meaning of the word.*

Another example is 'Sanctification' which usually has a meaning of a *process* throughout our Christian lives. But in some places the meaning refers to a moment in time (Romans 6 or 1Corinthians 1:2). This is why some have the doctrine of Sanctification as 'positional' as well as 'progressive' depending on the *varying context*.

Some people look up a word in Greek and assume that is the only or every meaning. This error, called by some '*the Root Fallacy*', assumes that the root of the word is the meaning in all its various cognate forms. An example of this is the word '*apostasia*' in 2Thessalonians 2:3. This noun comes from a root verb '*aphistemi*' which some have falsely construed to be a 'rapture' because the root word can be seen to be a 'standing apart from' or a 'departure'.\*\* But one cannot say the cognate verb always determines the meaning of the noun. Greek derivatives do not necessarily always carry the same precise meaning of the root words. The meanings and connotations of a New Testament word are determined primarily from the immediate context itself and to a lesser extent where the same word is used elsewhere including from the Old Testament (Septuagint).

*Context is crucial to understanding and thus interpreting a text.* It virtually makes the meaning! Again, the primary meaning of a word is not always the actual meaning in context. For example, the word '*redeem*' has a primary meaning of 'to buy back' but in some contexts this is literally an impossible meaning and it rather takes on a meaning of 'to make the most of the time we have', as in Ephesians 5:15 and Collosians 4:5. Secondary meanings are specific meanings that often share an aspect of the primary sense but occur only in some contexts.

One of the most difficult and precarious areas in interpretation is in the area of *Prophecy*. Many prophecies have a *dual or multiple* outlook and although they speak of future events which may not have occurred yet, they may also speak of events which have already occurred as shown in the same passage. For example, in Acts 1:16-19, Judas betrayal of Jesus is quoted from Psalm 41:5-13. This passage actually has a primary context referring to a man named Ahithopel who being a close friend of David, betrayed him.

*Context can be read with biased vision.* We need to be careful of reading in our own cultural or traditional bias. Most denominations have a theological bias or an emphasis on some doctrine or doctrines that are 'read into' some texts. Hence 'proof-texts' abound and the hermeneutical

system becomes a shotgun approach using certain verses to prove a position. The Seventh Day Adventists are masters at this, systematically putting verses together on top of each other to prove that Saturday is the only day we must rest and worship and that keeping Sunday is an error. But a look at each individual text will soon see that they each alone do not teach the final premise taught by them on this issue.

Yet in other situations, readers flatly refuse to accept what a scripture text *obviously* says and begin semantic gymnastics to resolve the emotional or logical issue they have in their own *human* minds. For example, when the Bible says '**No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him...**' (Jn.6:44) - it means what it says!: 'no man' and 'no man can come'. God must '*draw*' before any 'decision' or 'will' is involved. It never ceases to astonish us how some authors contort this scripture (and their minds) to a 'free will' eisegesis which has man playing a part in this salvation by grace.

Many Christians also place far too much importance on 'Confessions' (such as the 'Westminster Confession of Faith'), which, although often valuable documents, are not the inspired, inerrant Word of God; but merely, at best, a summary of the position held by a group of churches. Such Confessions were often a product of their time or served as a refutation of some error.

Finally, any who preach or teach the word of God, whether it be in a home group, Sunday school or in the pulpit, must do the 'hard yards' in researching and exegeting the passage. This will enable the preacher to better understand what the original author originally meant *before* making the 'applications' to his audience. Many of today's teaching sermons are filled with cute stories, illustrations and anecdotes that barely resemble what the passage of scripture being used actually says. Sermon preparation therefore must be an exercise in digging and searching out the authors original meaning, working from the 'whole' to the 'parts' and then from the 'parts' back to the 'whole'.

### **Objective or Subjective Hermeneutics?:**

The tendency today is to read modern issues back into the text, and a purely subjective approach follows. We are convinced that interpretation must be first *objective* and rigidly *factual* before any 'application' is derived from the text. The meaning of a text is constant and objective, whereas its significance and application may subjectively vary for different readers.

Let the text speak for itself first. Today we have this mentality: 'what does this text say to you'? The switch here is from the text to the *individual*; from objective exegesis to *subjective* eisegesis. This post-modernist trend steers many away from the author's meaning.

We must allow good hermeneutical principles to shape our exegesis and to control our tendency to read our prejudices into the text. Truth is objective by nature before it is felt. The subjectivity of today's eisegesis must be brought under control lest truth be abandoned.

**'Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth', (2Tim.2:15).**

**Terry Arnold**

\* See our article *Diakrisis (Australia)* July/Aug/2004 by Mike Claydon; and sermon CD '*God's Impossibilities*' by Terry Arnold.

\*\* See *Diakrisis (Australia)* Nov/Dec/2007 P.3.

## Your Comments and Questions

(Views expressed here are not necessarily those of the editors)

### Judaistic Legalism - Beware

Hi Terry and Mike. Have you heard of the 'Nazarene sect' that claim they are true followers of Jesus and that 'Christians' are deceived? Their teaching is below:

[Editors comments in bold brackets]

'WHO DO YOU WORSHIP? How do we know if we worship the right deity? Let's look at a few points that identify Yahweh's Messiah.

\*He came in His Father's name.

\*His Father's name is Yahweh. [**'Yahweh' is only one of his names. There are many names given and many describe an attribute of his character. We collectively call him 'God' in English - (Greek 'theos')**]

\*His Father's name was in his. [John's Gospel agrees]

\*Salvation is found in no other name (Yahshua - the salvation of Yahweh). [We call him 'Jesus' in English, 'yesous' in transliterated Greek, and *Iesous* in Greek. Which would one prefer? The original inspired NT was not written in Hebrew but Koine Greek! The Lord knows who we speak of. Its not the name we worship but the PERSON! He is the same one who died for my sins and was crucified on Calvary in my place as the scriptures and prophecies declare]

\*He kept the commandments of Yahweh and Torah. [So as to be sinless and to 'fulfil' the law in every part]

\*He did not come to destroy the Torah. [He came to 'fulfil' it for us. His work on the cross was substitutionary which included the payment of the legal penalty for us in full]

\*He kept the Shabbat. [Yes, as part of the law. He also 'broke' it (eg.Matt.12). He is 'Lord' of all!]

\*The keeping of the Sabbath is a sign between Yahweh and His people forever. [Yes, it was originally for the Jews (Ex.31:12-17 (see also Ezek.20:12) - specifically to Israel: '...Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations... Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever...' It was never meant to be religiously kept by the Gentiles as a Law]

\*He kept the clean food laws. He never ate pork. [In keeping the Jewish law. But what does the NEW Testament now say?: 1Tim.4:1-5: '...in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; 3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God has created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. 4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: 5 For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer'; Rom.2:16 'Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days'; Rom.14:20 'For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure...'; (See also Mk.7:18)

\*He kept Yahweh's Feasts. [As the 'children of Israel' were required to do, Lev.23]

\*He came to seek out and save the lost sheep of the House of Israel. [True. But He then extended that salvation to the Gentiles (Acts 15)]

\*He was in the grave 3 days and 3 nights. (The sign of Jonah). [True]...

Then whose Messiah does the following identify?:

\*He came in his own name. [As above]

\*His Father is called 'The Lord' or 'Baal'. [The 'Lord' is the Greek '*kurios*'. It is mentioned several times in the originals for 'the Lord Jesus Christ']

\*His Father's name is probably in his name, but it's not Yahweh. [Yahweh is one of his Hebrew names] Salvation is not found in his name.

\*He did away with the Torah (law). [He fulfilled it for us, rendering it finished, perfected and satisfied]

\*He is the Torahless (lawless) one. His followers do not keep the Shabbat, but keep the sun god's day or Sunday instead. [As did the apostles and the early church fathers (before Constantine) who kept the first day of the week (Sunday)! The apostles met together in fellowship, breaking bread and taking offerings on Sunday (Jn.20:19,26; Acts 20:7; 1Cor.16:1,2). The early church Fathers, (from Justin Martyr (100-165AD), Ignatius (110AD) to Cyprian (200-258AD), spoke of keeping Sunday as their Sabbath and as a day of worship. ('Sabbath' does not mean worship but 'rest'). All the great leaders, (Jerome, Huss, Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin, etc) all observed Sunday. But there is no scriptural command to keep a Sabbath or a 'Lord's Day' on any fixed day! If Sunday is connected with the 'sun god' then Saturday is also connected with the god 'Saturn']]

\*The keeping of Sunday is a sign between "The Lord?" and his people. [Nowhere is this found in scripture. It is a 'strawman' argument]

\*His followers say he abolished the clean/unclean food laws. [Let scripture speak again: 1Tim.4:1-5; Rom.2:16; Rom.14:20]. His followers eat pork. [Not necessarily]

\*His followers keep pagan feasts. [Some, not all]

\*His followers believe they have replaced Israel. [Many saved believers adhere to this false teaching. But the church has not 'replaced' Israel. God has not 'finished' with Israel, (Mic.4:11-13; Jer.31:36-37; Dan.12:1-3...]

\*He was in the grave from Friday evening to Sunday morning (1 1/2 days). [He was in the 'heart of the earth' for 3 days, exactly as the sign of Jonah stated]

\*He was born on Dec. 25 (same as Tammuz the sun god). [No one knows on which day he was born]

He will come in a secret rapture. [1Thess.4:16,17 'For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven...the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air...' ]

The first set identifies Yahshua, the true Messiah. The second set identifies the false Messiah'

[This 'Nazarene sect' is a cult. This is legalistic judaistic teaching which scripture and our article in Nov/Dec/2007 P.2, warns of (Tit.1:10-16; 1Tim.4:7; 2Pet.1:16; Tit.3:9)]

## Your Comments and Questions

(Views expressed here are not necessarily those of the editors)

### Webmaster Needed

**Our ministry website was once a valuable tool in the dissemination of information, but is badly in need of repair and maintenance. We currently have no volunteer who can maintain this site. If there are any readers who would like to volunteer to re-build and maintain the website under the oversight of the editors, please contact us by e-mail or in writing.**

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*Dear Terry, below is information concerning Maurice Roberts' speaking engagements...we are fundamentally committed to upholding and contending for the Gospel of grace alone through faith alone. Equally, we are against false ecumenism and the other recent perversions of the doctrine of justification...please receive my personal encouragement in your efforts to likewise contend for the faith, both positively for the Gospel and negatively against ecumenical and 'pentecostal' compromise. Blessings in the Gospel, (M.P., Brisbane)*

**Maurice Roberts - former editor of the international banner of truth Journal. Conferences in Brisbane, Sydney & Melbourne - July 2008; 'CHRIST IS ALL'**

*Jesus Christ as the source of all spiritual life, progress and future hope; and the Christian's need to maintain intimate fellowship with Him - three Saturday conferences. Maurice Roberts has a powerful message for believers and unbelievers today that is grounded in fervent love for Christ, His word and His gospel. (Note: these will be full-day Saturday events in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne)*

#### **'JUSTIFICATION IN THE MODERN CHURCH'**

*What future do our churches have...? No topic is more vital for the standing or falling of Evangelicalism today. Two meetings specifically for church leaders on this foundational and very current issue. (Note: These will be held in Brisbane and Sydney only)*

**Full Conference Details, Dates, Locations & Registration: [www.mauriceroberts2008.info](http://www.mauriceroberts2008.info); or (07)38891283**

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*Dear Terry, we at ...church hope you continue your work in exposing the errors that are creeping into the church, not only today, but all the errors from previous years. We continue to pray for your ministry.*

*Thank you for the 'Diakrisis' - it is a great encouragement to see that you have continued in this ministry...*

**(Brunswick, NSW)**

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*Terry, articles in recent Diakrisis have been first rate.*  
**(P.C., Cootamundra, NSW)**

*Hi Dear Brothers, I read through the entire Diakrisis newsletter last night - very good! When I consider things after your writings I am truly a legalist of Olympic proportions. Dreadful and very hypocritical when it comes to imposing lawful matters on others. Shameful.*

*I went on to read the back page where that person wrote to Terry about their Roman Catholic roots and their situation at work with those confronting them about Catholic dogma. I read that and remembered that this was just like I saw things many years ago when I loved the brethren and hated sin. God knows where those attributes have sunken to these days. Thanks for the articles and the time you put in Bros.*

**(Name withheld at editors discretion)**

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*Dear Terry. Thank you for sending me the book 'Tongues & Baptism With The Holy Spirit'. I have thoroughly enjoyed this book. I myself became involved with the Pentecostal movement and spoke in an unknown tongue. We went into a seekers room with others praying over us. It was very mechanical and hypnotic. Praise God that he knows my heart...even in my ignorance on this subject...God bless you. Keep up your good research.*

*Do you know of any reliable places in Melbourne where I also can study the Greek & Bible history?*

**(A.B., Vict.)**

**Editors comment: I advise not to learn Greek or even Bible history until the Old and New Testaments have been read, re-read and studied for some years. With the availability now of Greek 'tools' within various interlinear and Bible programmes such as E-sword and Logos, any Christian can make effective use of Greek in studying Bible passages. But for those who want to learn to read, understand and translate this amazing language, the best course I have used to give a good grounding in NT Greek is the Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) 'Basic Greek' course (with 'Electives'). The cost is approx. \$150. They are arguably self teaching and will take one through from the very beginning to a competent level where one will be able to read and translate Greek. (We can order this programme through our ministry). Another excellent aid is a computer CD called 'Greek Tutor' which has about 30 self taught lessons with the advantage of *hearing* the Greek words. I recommend both resources for the serious Greek student. But be aware, it requires much discipline and rote memorising to get past certain stages within these courses.**

### Terry's Itinerary

**August: Fiji Bible College**

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