

One Book, Many Opinions-part 2 Galatians 1:11-24

Have you noticed that when it comes to life there are often more questions than answers? That is also the case when it comes to matters of the church. Questions are a natural and a necessary part of our faith journey. It is also true that our God is a God of grace and truth who helps us find answers to those difficult questions that shape our faith and beliefs, even questions surrounding the Bible.

It is natural for questions to arise when Christians consider foundational principles we believe to be true about God and the Scriptures. By design we are curious people with inquiring minds that want to know why we have been placed on this earth and what our creator desires from us. Since that can only be determined from the Bible, we will want to know and for that matter we will need to know where this holy book we refer to as the Bible came from. We want to know who wrote it and how was it written. There are a number of other things we will want to know. Is the Bible we use and read today the same one the early church would have used? Who decided which books were included and which books were not? Why do we have so many different versions and translations? Does the Bible contain any mistakes? Perhaps the most important question of them all is this: **why should we believe it to be true when so many other things are not?**
Galatians 1:11-12

There are very few things in this modern age that are truly worthy of our trust. There is a large and growing number of people who have lost confidence in the integrity of government, media, law enforcement, science, medicine, and it pains me to say it, the church. That is especially prevalent among the younger segment of our society. In 2009 Britt Beemer of the American Research Group surveyed 1000 people aged 20-29 about their belief in the Bible. Almost half-44% of those questioned, said they did not believe the accounts of Bible to be true or accurate. Several reasons were given why.

- 4% said evolution proves the Bible is wrong
- 4% said Christians don't live by the Bible
- 7% said there is so much suffering in the world
- 11% said the Bible has errors
- 14% said science shows the world is old
- 15% said the Bible contradicts itself
- 18% said it was not translated correctly

But by far the most popular answer was this: 24% said the Bible is not believable because it was written by men. It is unclear whether that was meant in a misogynistic way (the authors of the Bible hated women) or simply that its authors were prone to error because of the fallen nature of humanity. Whatever their reasons may be, **the claim that the Bible is not trustworthy is widely used to justify modern humanistic teaching and cast doubt upon the authority of the Scriptures.**

Secular humanism is the religion of the 21st century. It is believing that humanity can determine morality and satisfaction in life without belief in God. It is replacing the Trinitarian God of the Scriptures with the trinitarian god of humanity. Me, myself and I. **It is a false religion that is in direct conflict with the Scriptures.**

For those that fall for it, the rationale goes something like this. The Bible was written a long time ago to people of a different culture and a different time. It is not God's way of revealing Himself to His creation but a collection of human myths and stories about morality and relationships. Times have changed and many of those principles are no longer relevant to people living in the 21st century. They will also claim that modern "science" has proved the Bible wrong when it comes to the teaching of evolution and how the world began, so it cannot be trusted.

Mr. Beemer concludes from his survey that "when there is compromise in one generation, and it's not dealt with, you usually notice it to a greater extent in the next generation". Which is where we are today, as thousands of years of traditionally recognized Biblical concepts and teaching have either been compromised or tossed out altogether in just a few generations. Though that may sound like a relatively new thing, it actually began in the 1850's when a person often described as one of the most influential figures in human history published a book entitled "On the Origin of Species". Soon after Charles Darwin's book was published the church found itself in an uncomfortable position of defending the traditional Biblical understanding of creation against science and evolution. What is interesting is that two extremely influential figures of human history-namely Jesus Christ and Charles Darwin (both males by the way) wrote books that still greatly impact the way we choose to understand how the world as we know it and humanity got its start.

It was not long before the liberal wing of the church compromised with science and academia and began teaching that the age of the Earth is not important. All that matters is that you trust in Jesus and believe in the resurrection and the Gospel accounts. At first glance, that sounds innocent enough. But when almost 2/3 of the New Testament, namely the letters of Paul, become optional in matters of faith, deep doctrinal and moral questions are certain to result. We are free to pick and choose what parts we may like and what parts we don't. **However, there is great risk in ignoring the parts we don't like. Eternal risk.**

Job 40:2

That early compromise with science and academia has progressed into compromise and in some cases outright denial of basic Biblical truths in many churches and denominations. Today that list would include the Virgin Birth of Jesus, His atoning sacrifice for sinners, His crucifixion and bodily resurrection from the dead, the origin and identity of human sexuality, the definition of marriage, and the doctrine of the Trinity. What is left? A very shallow understanding of righteousness, salvation, reconciliation with God and eternal life. In other words, Scriptural holiness is out, and secular humanism, the opinion that says humanity is capable of morality and self-fulfillment without belief in God or the Scriptures, is in. It all began with a misguided effort to reconcile the apparent contradictions between the teaching of the church and the teaching of science.

From a young age we are conditioned to believe that intelligent and reasonable people should trust science rather than the Bible because science is based on fact and the Bible is based on faith. When we see something on social media or watch a program on the History Channel that conflicts with long-held Biblical concepts, it reinforces the notion that the Bible is less than true. And on the other hand, if we agree with something we see that somehow sneaks past censorship and edifies the Scriptures, we are looked at as deniers of science or religious bigots. That is often the case even though some level of faith is required for belief in science or the Bible and for that matter what we see on television or the internet. The aim is simple. If it can be shown that the Bible is wrong when it comes to things of science and nature, what it says about morals and behavior are also suspect.

The Bible is not a science book, yet when properly interpreted the Scriptures will be found to be in perfect harmony with natural science.

Genesis 1:1 Job 36: 26-29

After all, the best scientist in the universe helped write it! Scientists have not been able to satisfactorily explain how the world began other than to say something came from nothing with a big bang, a cosmic accident, and all that we see, hear and touch today evolved from a single organism that was somehow formed in the process. The Bible on the other hand explains that only God can make something out of nothing and design and create this amazing world and everything in it. Both are theories that require an element of faith to believe. Evolutionist D.M.S.Watson said this: "evolution is a theory universally accepted not because it can be proven by logically coherent evidence to be true, but because the only alternative, special creation, is clearly incredible. He is right- God is incredible and so are the Scriptures. That is true because the source of the Bible- which our Scripture lesson clearly reveals to be Jesus Christ- is also the creator of the world.

The problem lies not with the author or the writers of the Bible, but with how we choose to understand it. The so-called conflict between science and the Bible exists only in the minds of doubters like Watson. **Sowing seeds of doubt as to the truth of the Biblical account of our human origins will grow the bitter fruit of doubting the authority of Scripture as a whole.**

Deut 4:2

It is a clever way to discredit the moral teachings of the Bible. We live in a day and age where we simply don't know who or what to believe. The good news is that there is something we can trust, and it is this sacred collection of 66 books we call the Bible. The question is why. The simple answer is this: **we will not be able to grow or mature in our faith without a reasonable measure of trust that the words on these pages are a truthful gift from God.** Another clue is found in verse 23 & 24.

Galatians 1: 23-24

Lives are changed and God is glorified when we separate truth from opinion. My prayer is that we will be obedient to the Holy Spirit and discern the difference. Amen