

Rom. 14:19 So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.

John 8:32 and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.

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LOOKING TO JESUS

by Jim Stauffer

“So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.” (Numbers 21:9) “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.” (John 3:14–15)

We remember the incident in the wilderness. The people repeated their complaints against Moses and the Lord saying they had been brought out of Egypt to die in the wilderness. As a result of this complaint the Lord sent fiery serpents among them and as many as were bitten were dying. When they pled with Moses to intercede on their behalf with the Lord, he did so and was instructed to make a bronze serpent and set it on a standard for the people to look to for salvation from the bite of the serpents. When they were bitten and looked upon the bronze serpent on the standard they lived.

God once again demonstrates our need to rely upon Him. To trust Him as He has promised to provide. There are many ways in which we fail to do this. Mankind has throughout history trusted in what he can produce and has suffered when he has failed. God has promised for men today just as He did in the days of Moses in the wilderness. But His promise today is as it was then, contingent upon man looking to the Lord and not trusting in himself.

Jesus is teaching a lesson on eternal life in our text compared to the physical life granted by looking to the bronze serpent. He tells us if we will look to Him we can attain eternal life. He is, after all, *.....the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.” (John 14:6)* Jesus reiterates this point in the form of a question to Martha just prior to raising Lazarus from the dead. *“Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25,26)*

Looking to Jesus is as He says a sign of believing in Him. Throughout Scripture man is shown to please God

when he believes in Him. It can be something as simple as those Israelites looking upon the elevated bronze serpent for life. Or it can be as complicated as Abraham offering Isaac on an altar to God. Isaac was Abraham's son of promise, the son through whom the Christ Himself would come to bring this eternal life. Yet Abraham trusted in God to raise him from the dead if necessary to keep His promise to Abraham and therefore obeyed the Lord's command (**Heb. 11:17-19**).

Now the point of all this reference to Jesus' words, Moses' actions and Abraham's faith is to enable us to fully understand the concept of faith. Looking to Jesus is an indication we truly believe His promises. By truly believe His promises we differentiate between those who speak favorably of the Lord but in their hearts they trust in the things of the world. This is after all what He accused the Pharisees of in **Matthew 15:8,9**, *“This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.”*

At some point those of us who claim to believe will be tested by the trials of life and it will then be known whether we truly believe and trust Him or if all along we have depended upon ourselves and other men to provide.

Jesus said in His sermon on the mount as He addressed the anxiety men suffer over material matters that are beyond their control, *“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” (Matthew 6:33)* And the question to each of us is whether we live daily looking to Jesus. Are we trusting Him that if we put Him and His kingdom first, we will receive in this life those things sufficient to sustain ourselves?

Jesus said, *“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” (John 14:15)* Are we willing to keep His commandments. Loving Jesus means the same thing as looking to him. When we need to know what to do for the forgiveness of sin or what to offer in worship to Him, will we keep His commandments?

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When we teach others in order to establish this faith in Christ in them that they may obey His commands, will we follow the sound doctrine Paul taught Timothy, *“In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.”* (1 Timothy 4:6) A doctrine that forbids accepting teachers that just say those things we wish to hear. *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,”*

(2 Timothy 4:3) Are we willing to look to Jesus and discipline ourselves in order to be acceptable to Him rather than alienate Him by allowing men to teach things beyond what He has authorized? *“Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.”*

(2 John 1:9)

These are some things that will help us recognize when we are looking to Jesus instead of to outside influences that come from the hearts of men. For our eternal life depends upon us fixing our gaze on Him for guidance just as those Israelites had to literally fix their gaze on the bronze serpent to live.

Restoring the Kingdom to Israel

“Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). We have often missed the importance of this text by passing off the question of the apostles as ignorance about the true nature of the kingdom. But I’m afraid we are the ones who have missed the message. In Acts 1:3, Jesus spent forty days with the apostles, *“speaking about the kingdom of God.”* It would be hard to believe they were still ignorant after Jesus’ death and resurrection and over a month of instruction specifically about the kingdom.

“Kingdom restoration” is the key theme of Acts (note 1:3 and 28:31, which bookends the message of the letter). Further, Jesus did not rebuke the apostles for their question. Instead, he spoke of the *“time”* restoration would be complete which was in the Father’s hand. Even more revealing is Peter’s statement in Acts 3:21 concerning Jesus, *“...whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.”* Add one more point of context. After Jesus told the apostles that the time was fixed by the Father, he said, *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.”* The message is, the time for complete restoration should not be the concern. Instead, the process of restoration is

the gospel spread to the end of the earth. Restoring Israel has to do with peopling the world for Christ (Isaiah 54:1-3). Acts gives a model of Christians fulfilling the promise of restoring the kingdom to Israel.

Restoration Conclusions

Allow me to offer some quick conclusions from this text that will hopefully generate further study on your part: Kingdom and Messiah promises do not refer to a new kingdom in the sense that God did not have a kingdom in the Old Testament period or that God was not King. King Jesus solves the problem of the physical nation/ kingdom/kings who were unable to be a kingdom of righteousness and holiness, honoring God throughout the world and fulfilling the Abrahamic promises. King Jesus is conquering the world and Satan, reversing the curses of the Garden and truly bringing all things in subjection to God (1 Cor. 15:21-27), things in heaven and things on earth (Eph. 1:10). Thus, *“he reigns till all enemies are put under his feet”* (Psalm 110). See also: Amos 9:11-15 [Acts 15:13-18].

Restoration of the kingdom also refers to the restoration of the people. God cannot have people in his kingdom like those in the physical nation. His purpose was always to produce a *“chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light”* (1 Peter 2:9 [Exodus 19:5-6]). The physical nation failed this calling, but the restored Israel will not fail. See also Ezekiel 36:19-32.

Kingdom restoration has not been completed, neither have all the Old Testament prophecies been fulfilled. For example, Hebrews 4:8-10 records, *“For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.”* When God rested on the seventh day and later foretold the land promise, Canaan was only prefiguring the ultimate rest. Though we receive a rest of sorts in our release from the bondage of Satan (Matt. 11:28-30), we still await our ultimate rest: *“flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable”* (1 Cor. 15:50). God’s “picture-promises” even as far back as the beginning of Genesis are still in the process of being fulfilled and some are not completed until *“this mortal will have put on immortality”* (1 Cor. 15:53). Kingdom restoration has to do with filling the world with the knowledge of the Lord (Isaiah 11:9). Kingdom people are so excited about the knowledge of God that they go everywhere inviting people to come and hear (Isaiah 2:2-3; Acts 8:3-4). The prophets are filled with pictures of the Messiah’s disciples working with and for their King in bringing the gospel message (Isaiah 49:1-9 [Acts 13:47; 2 Cor. 6:1-2]; Ezekiel 36:37-38;

Zechariah 3:8-10; etc).

Kingdom restoration should be our motivation and our goal. Our work is far broader than simply a local church. We are kingdom people with a kingdom mission!

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THE NATURE OF FAITH

“Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed” (Luke 1:1-4)

Christians are people of faith. Faith saves, faith justifies, faith directs the walk of all who seek to follow Jesus (**Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 5:1; 2 Corinthians 5:7**). *“The faith,”* the objective body of truth referred to as the New Testament, drives the faith, the subjective, personal faith of God’s people (**Jude 3; Ephesians 4:5**). It is also true that faith, whether *“the faith”* or our own personal faith, binds believers to the same conclusions about Jesus Christ. That is what Luke is writing about.

Luke, *“the beloved physician,”* was not the only person looking into and seeking an explanation about Jesus of Nazareth. Writing specifically to Theophilus (a title, a real person?), Luke, as a trained medical man, was able to provide an eyewitness account of this divine narrative; he performed an autopsy; he saw with his own eyes. What Luke examined would be added to what Theophilus already knew; *“certainty”* was Luke’s goal. Will you agree that we, too, can examine Luke’s account and have certainty about who Jesus is?

Where does Luke’s gospel come from? In the 1st c. there were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word; the apostles and others had direct contact with Jesus. Paul said that some actually saw Jesus after His resurrection (**1 Corinthians 15:6**). These people could provide firsthand information about Jesus and His life. This information was delivered to *“us,”* Luke and others, a second generation of believers.

Luke *“investigated everything carefully from the beginning”* and then wrote his findings *“in consecutive order.”* Now Theophilus could *“know the exact truth about the things you have been taught”* (**Luke 1:3-4 NASV**). Think of an explorer seeking the source, the headwaters of a mighty river. Where does the river begin? How can one follow its course? Theophilus could do that after being taught and after learning more about Jesus Christ. Luke was accurate in his work. Would we expect less than that from a trained doctor?

We want our doctors to be careful and precise before they operate, don’t we? A careful study of Luke’s gospel (or any other gospel) will reveal a plan, or pattern, or scheme, by which the reader can see the orderliness of the message.

Luke is concerned with certainty. He wanted Theophilus to be firm and stable in his faith. He wanted Theophilus to know that the truth about Jesus was undoubted truth. This would prevent and protect Theophilus from spiritual dangers. To know Jesus is to get Him deeply in our hearts. Yes, we know what the Bible says. But we need to know of whom the Bible speaks. Will this come from subjective feelings? From some emotional experience? From our loved ones? No! We know about Jesus by getting in His book and examining what He says. In this case, by examining what Luke is writing about.

Randy Harshbarger

Let’s Think This Through #4

Following through with the hypothesis of there being no God we come to the obvious conclusions that there is no creator, I am not made in his image and there is nothing special about mankind. Today’s point is similar in that it deals with morality. The point is this: If there is no God, then, there is no OBJECTIVE STANDARD of morality, right and wrong.

It is important to note the concept of an OBJECTIVE standard. A SUBJECTIVE standard can change from person to person, and even from day to day. Most days I like 2% milk in my coffee while some days I like French vanilla creamer. My wife likes her coffee black, YUCK!!! Neither of us is right or wrong because that is the nature of a SUBJECTIVE STANDARD, it changes. An OBJECTIVE STANDARD, however, has its origin outside of man and it therefore does not change from person to person or from day to day. One is only possible if there is a God to give the standard. Murder is only objectively wrong if there is a God who has given that standard. This is why socialism has always been willing to eliminate those who disagree with those in power. It has “a priori” ruled out God and therefore anything those in power wish to do is morally permissible.

I have been informed by my loving wife that I can be a genuine pain to live with. Yet, in spite of her obvious misunderstanding we have been married for 39 years and some change. Why? Because we both accept that there is an OBJECTIVE STANDARD that applies to marriage and that standard was given by the God of Heaven for our obedience and benefit.

Objective standards give blessings subjective standards can’t approach!

Cleveland Reddinger

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

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Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

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SUNDAY MORNING SERMON: ARE YOU IN THE FIGHT?



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10