“Plausible Deniability”

Our title phrase basically means that one believably did not know and is therefore not responsible. It has a more technical and legal definition that includes freedom from accountability by those in upper management based on a believable lack of knowledge (and/or control) regarding what their subordinates were specifically doing, which in such cases was usually either wrong or illegal. Obviously in either definition, a plausibility factor is part of the determination of accountability. Are there reasons or circumstances extant that make this lack of professed knowledge believable, and therefore them accountable? Such is the unfortunate nature of the world in which we now live… that such definitions and distinctions have become necessary. Ignorance has become at least a legal excuse.

Transition these things over to the spiritual realm. Read carefully Romans 1:18-20, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”

Specifically note a few salient points to our subject from this text:

1. God’s wrath is revealed (in/by the gospel, as is His righteousness, cp.v.17) against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of those who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, v.18. How does one suppress the truth? By denying the

2. Internal Evidence. The knowledge of God’s existence is personally undeniable because it is evident both within and to each individual, v.19. Additionally, suppressors of truth usually also deny the

3. External Evidence. The knowledge of God’s power (ability) and nature (character) are clearly seen and understood through the creation, v.20a.

4. The result is that those who deny or suppress such internal and external evidence are “without excuse,” v.20b; and as such,

5. Will experience the wrath of God as revealed from heaven, v.18.

Simplified, if I may, what this means spiritually is that when it comes to eternal judgment, there is no plausible deniability. No one will be able to stand before God and say, “I didn’t know anything about You, therefore I am accountable,” and thus plead plausible deniability. God has placed within us ample evidence of His existence. Only a fool says, “There is no God” (Psalm 14:1) because our very bodies declare His workmanship, Psalm 139:13-16. The wonders, eccentricities, specificities, and abilities of the human body are not the result of mere random chance, but special creation by a divinely powerful God.

Furthermore, pleading “plausible deniability” is thwarted by the willful ignoring of the external evidence of God’s presence and power that is manifested through the creation. The psalmist stated, “The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and the firmament is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge,” Psalm 19:1-2; and further revealed, “The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the peoples have seen His glory,” Psalm 97:6.

So much for spiritual “plausible deniability.” The ample internal and external evidence God provides of existence and nature render all who would seek to deny or suppress the truth about Him or their own accountability “without excuse,” Romans 1:20.
But instead of seeking to establish “plausible deniability,” embrace the truth of God’s existence and accept the responsibility to live according to His “gospel, for it is the power of God to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, ‘But the righteous man shall live by faith’,” Romans 1:16-17. That’s a much better plan than “plausible deniability”!

(Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)