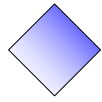


The Voice of Truth



March 2, 2014

“Is There An Excuse For Being Ignorant of God?”

By Jimmy Pettigrew

Does the covenant of God apply to all men? Are alien sinners bound by any commands in the covenant of Christ? Would God punish a man for being ignorant of Him?

There are many in this world and in the body of Christ that would answer "NO" to these vital questions. We need to stop letting our feelings be our guide, and look into God's word for the source to answer these important questions.

Paul declared that the word is to be preached (2 Timothy 4:2). We see that all scripture is profitable (2 Timothy 3:16-17), and that nothing profitable is to be held back. The whole counsel of God is to be proclaimed to men (Acts 20:20, 27).

Does the covenant of God apply to all men? The Biblical answer is "YES". The Lord commissioned His apostles to teach "all nations" (Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 24:47). "Unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). "To preach the word to the whole creation, to every creature" (Mark 16:15-16). Thus, all men, not merely Christians, are accountable to the covenant of Christ. Christ will judge all men by these words (John 5:22, 27; 12:48). Therefore, all men are accountable to the covenant of Christ because all men will be judged by His words.

Are alien sinners bound by any commands in the covenant of Christ? The Biblical answer is "YES". The commands to repent and be baptized are in the covenant of Christ (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:15-16). They are not addressed to Christians, but to alien sinners. Since alien sinners are accountable to Christ, therefore, all men are accountable to the covenant of Christ. If not, why encourage alien sinners to obey the Law of Christ, if they are not answerable to the Gospel of Christ? Why even teach or preach the word?

Would God punish a man for being ignorant of Him?

Again, the scriptural answer is "YES". *"And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power?" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).* Paul writing, guided by the Holy Spirit, gives us two groups upon whom the Lord will take vengeance:

(1) ON THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW GOD.

(2) ON THOSE WHO DO NOT OBEY THE GOSPEL.

We can see from this passage that there is no excuse for being ignorant of God. God will punish those who know not God, or those disobedient to the Gospel. It is the responsibility of every person to know God. *"That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:27).* Paul tells us that it is man's duty to seek God; this is the way we come to know God. *"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near."* *"Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways" (Isaiah 55:6; 58:2).*

"Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation" (Romans 15:20). Paul preached in places that had not heard the Gospel before. Why would Paul do this if all men are not accountable to God? Because it is the responsibility of every person to know God. Paul preached in places that had not heard the good news. Yet, some would say, leave them be, if they never heard the Gospel before, God would put them in a saved state, they are not accountable! God would never punish a man that never heard the Gospel! Paul told us He would in **2 Thessalonians**. Who are we going to believe, Paul or our feelings?

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Paul writing to the churches in Galatia says, "*Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods*" (**Galatians 4:8**). A picture is drawn of the condition of the Galatians before they became Christians, "*Ye knew not God*". Why did Paul preach the good news to them if they didn't need to know the Gospel? Before becoming Christians the Galatians had enslaved themselves to serving false gods, "*But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?*" (**Galatians 4:9**).

Observe the contrast between the condition of one who is not a Christian, "*Ye knew not God*," and one who has become a Christian, "*Known of God*." "*Known of God*" is equal to being recognized by God as one of His obedient children (**1 Corinthians 8:3; John 14:15**).

We can see through our study that the covenant of Christ applies to all men and that alien sinners are bound by the commands of Christ and that there is no excuse for being ignorant of God (**Acts 17:30; Romans 1:20; Psalm 19:1**). ♦

"What Determines Truth?"

By Jarrod Jacobs

Truth is an endangered thing. Many want nothing to do with the truth. They are like the Gentiles who "*did not like to retain God in their knowledge*" (**Rom. 1:28**). Why did they not want to retain God in their knowledge? Because God stood in the way of them doing what they pleased!

In like manner truth, the standard between right and wrong, is cast aside by many today. Many people say, "Truth is relative." Therefore, what may be the truth for you, will not be true for me and vice versa. In spiritual matters, truth must be determined by God. Truth itself transcends all lines. If it is right, it is right, if it is wrong, it is wrong.

Let's study and learn what does and does not determine truth.

What Does Not Determine Truth?

Personal Experience

The Methodists say they determine the truth by: 1) The Bible 2) Scholars 3) **Personal Insight/Experience** 4) Reason 5) Tradition. With this in mind, we can understand why the Methodists have changed their beliefs at different times through the years!

Just like the Methodists, there are many people who try to determine the truth based upon what they have experienced in their lives. Consider the following statements of those who try to determine the truth based upon personal experience.

1. "*I have always heard it said*" Or, "*I have never heard it said*" Before Columbus sailed to the Americas, people had "always heard" that the earth was flat, did this make it the truth? Obviously not!

2. "*I have never done it like that.*" Just because something is unknown to you does not necessarily make it wrong. There were several people in the Bible who thought their personal experience revealed the truth. Consider the Athenians who, after hearing Paul preach the truth, "mocked" him (**Acts 17:32**). Why was this? It is because what Paul said was different from all they had ever experienced. They had "never heard anything like that"! Therefore, they automatically assumed it was wrong.

In like manner, the Jews persecuted Christ and the apostles because what was taught by them was not what the Jews had experienced before. Clearly, personal experience does not determine the truth.

One's Conscience

"Let your conscience be your guide" is the cry of many. The word "conscience" is defined as: "*1. the sense of what is right or wrong in one's conduct or motives, impelling one toward right action. 2. the complex of ethical and moral principles that controls or inhibits the actions or thoughts of an individual*" (Webster's).

Our conscience can be helpful in our decision-making process, but it depends upon how it was trained. If our conscience is trained right, it will bother us when we do that which is wrong. Otherwise, our conscience will not bother us, even when we do wrong things.

Something interesting to note is the number of people in the New Testament who did the wrong things and their conscience did not bother them. For example, the apostle Paul did "*many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth*" (**Acts 26:9-10**). He persecuted the Christians in Jerusalem, "*ravaging the church, entering house to house,*

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he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison" (**Acts 8:3**). His life is described as follows: "You have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers" (**Gal. 1:13-14**).

Having done all of these things, he stood before the rulers of his day and said, "Brothers, I have lived my life before God in all good conscience up to this day" and "So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man" (**Acts 23:1, 24:16**). Did Paul's conscience bother him as he persecuted Christians? No, sir! In fact, when he showed "raging fury against them" (**Acts 26:11**), his clear conscience did not change the facts.

Consider some other people in the Bible. Paul said there were some who would "depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (**I Tim. 4:1-2**). Still others had "defiled consciences" (**Titus 3:15**). Does this sound like these people are worthy of emulation? Of course, not! Therefore, we cannot blindly follow our conscience, and expect to be pleasing to God. Our conscience alone does not determine the truth.

One's Family

Some blindly follow whatever their family does. The problem is that doing this is about like following our conscience. Families can be helpful or harmful to us spiritually, depending on how they are! While we are expected to honor our fathers and mothers (**Matt. 15:4; Mk. 10:19; Eph. 6:1-2**), our family does not determine the truth.

There were some people in the Bible who followed their family, and they paid dearly for it. Consider Lot's wife (**Gen. 19:24-26; Lk. 17:32**). The screams of her family and loved ones meant more to her than the safety provided by God. In her disobedience to God, she was turned into a pillar of salt.

Many Jews followed the traditions of their families rather than Christ. Therefore, Jesus told the people, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more

than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (**Matt. 10:34-37; Lk. 14:26**).

What Determines Truth?

Now that we know some things that do not determine truth, what determines truth?

God

Jesus said, "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (**Jn. 17:17**). In saying this, we see that God's word (not man's) is synonymous with truth. When we speak of truth, we are speaking of God's word; and to speak of God's word is to speak of the truth! Jesus said that the truth is what makes men free (**Jn. 8:32**). Our Lord also said, "Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you" (**Jn. 15:3**). Whose word was He speaking? God's (**Jn. 12:49-50**)!

Looking to David, "the sweet psalmist of Israel" (**II Sam. 23:1**), we read His words of praise to God's word when he penned, "all your commandments are true" (**Ps. 119:151**). He also declared, "And now, O Lord GOD, you are God, and your words are true" (**II Sam. 7:28**).

Since God determines the truth, when we push away the truth we are pushing away God (**Rom. 1:28**)! When we say that truth is relative, we have cast God aside as King. We are trying to determine what is truth, rather than yielding to God and His word. This is a dangerous position in which to be, because it is God who determines truth, not us.

A beautiful description of God's word is found in **II Timothy 3:16-17**: "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." Based upon what has been said, we know that we could not make it through this life without God's word.

God's word is what is to be preached and taught today (**II Tim. 4:2, 2:2**). Why must this be done? Because in so doing, we are spreading the truth! The truth that transcends borders, racial lines, and all other man-made divisions!

Conclusion

God's word is what determines the truth because it is the truth (**Jn. 17:17**). That is why we stress that "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (**I Pet.**

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4:11! Nothing else determines the truth. This is made clear in **Galatians 1:6-9**. If we follow our thoughts, or what any man says, then we are jeopardizing our soul's salvation!

have lost it all (**Matt. 16:26**). This is why it is so important that we follow the Lord's will and not man's whims. When we appreciate the fact that it is God who has determined what is the truth, it makes the choice much easier, doesn't it? Who will we follow, God or self? Truth or error?

Let us determine that we will let nothing keep us from following the rock-solid, unchangeable, indestructible word of God! This is all that matters. If we lose our soul, we

May we follow God's will, so that one day we can see Heaven together (**Rev. 22:14, 17-19**).

Credit: The Old Paths - 3/31/13 ♦

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

BETWEEN the atheist who would not dream of financially supporting the church and the Christian who will not financially support the Lord's church?

BETWEEN the skeptic who does not believe the Bible and the negligent Christian who never reads it?

BETWEEN those who do not believe in Bible classes and those who choose never to attend a class?

BETWEEN the atheist who does nothing to build up the Lord's church and the Christian who finds fault with others, but does nothing himself?

BETWEEN a man of the world, and a person in the church who lives like a man in the world?

BETWEEN a man of the world who lives for self and a person in the church who lives for self, not God?

These are tough questions for Christians who live in a tough world. The fact is, Christians make no difference until they are different. Again, **WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?** ♦

The Nature Of The Kingdom Of God

IS NOT

IS

- 1. Of This World (**John 18:36**).
- 2. Eating and Drinking (**Rom. 14:17**).
- 3. In Word (**1 Cor. 4:20**).
- 4. With Observation (**Luke 17:20**).

- 1. In Power (**1 Cor. 4:20**).
- 2. Righteousness (**Rom. 14:17**).
- 3. Peace (**Rom. 14:17**).
- 4. Joy (**Rom. 14:17**).
- 5. Within You (**Luke 17:21**).
- 6. Unshakable (**Heb. 12:28**). ♦

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear and Learn - **Rom. 10:17** m. **10:9-10** ; **1 Pet. 3:21** ; **John 6:45; 17:3**

Believe - **Heb. 11:6**; **John 6:29; 8:24**

Repent - **Luke 13:3**; **Acts 3:19; 17:30**

Confess the Lord - **Matt. 10:32-33**; **Romans 10:9-10**; **1 Pet. 3:21**

Be Baptized - **Mark 16:16**; **Acts 22:16**; **Gal. 3:26-27**

Continue in the Apostles' Teaching - **Acts 2:42**; **2 Tim. 3:14-17**

About the Hillcrest church of Christ

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Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*



**A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month*

www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com