



# TRUTH

“... thy word is truth” (John 17:17)

February 2011

## IN WHOM OR WHAT SHOULD WE PUT OUR TRUST?

In whom or what do people living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century put their trust? Regardless of the country, culture, or race of people involved, generally speaking the answers are the same worldwide.

Some trust in the arm of human flesh. The old spiritual song says, “The arm of flesh will fail you, ye dare not trust your own.” Yet, that is the choice that a bunch of folks make. First, there are those who trust in themselves. These are arrogant, thinking that they can manage their own affairs, take care of themselves, and get along just fine without God. The Bible has something to say about those who trust in their own thinking and power: “*He who trusts in his own heart is a fool . . .*” (Proverbs 28:26).

Others confidently place their trust in someone other than themselves. In the days of the prophet Isaiah, the Assyrian Empire was a great force in the Middle East. In order to try and protect themselves from the powerful arm of that nation, the children of Israel ran down to Egypt “*to trust in the shadow of Egypt*” (Isaiah 30:2,3). Jehovah rebuked them for such faithless action. They could have chosen to trust in Him. Instead, they chose to trust in the arm of flesh, meaning that they thought mere humans had more to offer than the Almighty. How unwise.

We also come across those who trust in their material possessions. They swell with pride as they show off their latest purchases and seem obsessed in talking about the quantity of stuff that they own. We are reminded of a rich farmer who was convinced that his material blessings could guarantee his future existence and happiness. God labeled the fellow as a “fool” (Luke 12:19,20). It was in that setting that the Master proclaimed that “*one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses*” (12:15). “*Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will remember the name of the LORD our God*” (Psalm 20:7). Substitute “cars, computers, and land investments” into the above verse in the place of “chariots” and “horses” and you have an accurate picture of the masses in the modern world.

When it comes to trusting in the temporary, corruptible items of this life, a vast number of people trust specifically in their money. When the fall of Judah to the Babylonians was imminent, God warned His people with these words: “*Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD’s wrath*” (Zephaniah 1:18).

Are we listening? In the New Testament we learn that there were wealthy saints in the first-century church. What did they need to hear? “*Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy*” (1 Timothy 6:17,18). That is clear enough, is it not?

Some trust in their family relationships. The offspring of a king, president, or prime minister may think that they are entitled to the privilege of disregarding the law. They may be lifted up with pride simply because of the blood that flows through their veins connects them to powerful authority figures. In the church, from time to time we observe a similar mindset as some whose fathers serve as an elder, deacon, or preacher apparently think that their father’s role exempts them from following the strict code of holy conduct that is required of *every single* follower of the Christ (1 Peter 1:14-16).

It is also sad to see people trust in religious lies. “*Do not trust in these lying words, saying, ‘The temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD are these’ . . . Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit*” (Jeremiah 7:4,8). Mark it down: false messages are not helpful! False teachers present false messages that lead them and their followers to destruction (2 Peter 2:1,2). We must not put our trust in any human messenger.

What is the only correct answer to the question, “In whom or what should you and I put our trust?” The Lord God. “*Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD*” (Jeremiah 17:7). “*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding*” (Proverbs 3:5). What great advice! We should live our lives in such a way that we can honestly say what the apostle Paul did: “. . . we trust in the living God . . .” (1 Timothy 4:10).

When our family is upset with us because we are putting the Lord first in our lives, we must keep on trusting in Him. When the value of our financial investments has declined sharply, we need to trust in the Lord. When Christians in whom we had great confidence in the past become unfaithful, we have got to put our trust in God. Whatever may be going on in our lives, we need to remember and practice the message of Psalm 62:8: “*Trust in Him at all times, you people.*”

-- Roger D. Campbell

## LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR

If you asked Bible students to name one of the kings of Babylon, my guess is that the most common answer would be Nebuchadnezzar. That is understandable, seeing that he is mentioned by name in eight books of the Old Testament. As the leader of the Babylonian Empire from B.C. 605-562, he left a great mark on the history of the Middle East during his lifetime, including his role in destroying Judah.

Nebuchadnezzar's reign over the Babylonian Empire was going on while Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel were serving as prophets of Jehovah. It was a period of change and turmoil, a time when God's arm of judgment came down against the Southern Kingdom of Judah and other nations in that region which rebelled against Him. Nebuchadnezzar was "in on" much of the action. What can we observe about the life of this mighty, memorable monarch?

First, the Bible describes Nebuchadnezzar as a servant of the Lord. "*Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, says the LORD, and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them . . .*" (Jeremiah 25:9). God also said, "*And now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant . . .*" (Jeremiah 27:6). It has perplexed some students of God's word to read that Jehovah referred to Nebuchadnezzar, a ruthless man and idolater (Daniel 3:1), as "my servant." How can it be true that Nebuchadnezzar served the living God?

Actually, the references to King Nebuchadnezzar as a "servant" of God are made in contexts in which the Lord explained that He would use Nebuchadnezzar as *the instrument* by which He would punish Judah and others (Jeremiah 25:4-12). So, calling Nebuchadnezzar the Lord's "servant" does not mean that he faithfully served Him, but rather that he was one through whom God carried out His will. In a similar manner, God earlier used the king of Assyria to punish evildoers, calling him "*the rod of my anger*" (Isaiah 10:5). Later the Lord used King Cyrus of the Medo-Persian Empire to free the Jews from captivity and help them rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Cyrus was not a true worshipper of Jehovah, but because of his role in carrying out God's will in overthrowing Babylon and assisting the cause of the Israelites, God called Cyrus "my shepherd" and His "anointed" (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1). As the Ruler of the universe, God sent "his armies" to destroy the rebellious city of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (Matthew 22:7). That simply means that God, who rules in the kingdoms of men, used the Romans soldiers to carry out His will.

Second, Nebuchadnezzar was a king whose dreams had relevance that reached far beyond his own life. In one dream he saw an image with a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet a mixture of iron and clay. A stone then came and destroyed the image (Daniel 2:32-34). What in the world was that all about? The prophet Daniel's

explanation was that Nebuchadnezzar's dream pointed to five kingdoms. From the Bible and secular history, we learn that the first four kingdoms were the Babylonian Empire, the Medo-Persian Empire, the Greek Empire, and the Roman Empire, in that order. And the 5<sup>th</sup> kingdom? It was the kingdom that the Lord would set up in the days of the Roman kings. God's kingdom would never be destroyed. That kingdom was the church of the Christ (Matthew 16:18,19), to which God adds all saved people (Acts 2:47; Ephesians 5:23). That kingdom sounds important, does it not?

Third, Nebuchadnezzar gave lip service to the God of heaven, but was not totally devoted to Him. He learned that "*there is a God in heaven*" (Daniel 2:28). After Daniel explained his dream about the five kingdoms, he proclaimed to the prophet, "*Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings . . .*" (Daniel 4:47). Just three verses after that we read of how Nebuchadnezzar made an idol out of gold and compelled all of his citizens to bow down and worship it (Daniel 3:1-6). Later he praised the God of heaven as the only one that can deliver (Daniel 3:29), but there is no indication that he every fully devoted himself to serving wholeheartedly the one, true God. Let us learn a lesson. It is not acceptable to draw near to the Lord with our lips if our heart is far from Him (Mark 7:6). God is not happy when we try to serve Him and other so-called deities (Matthew 6:24). He wants our complete commitment at all times.

Fourth, Nebuchadnezzar was brought low because of his pride, but then he humbled himself. Nebuchadnezzar took pride in his own power and honor, so God brought him low, causing him to dwell among the beasts of the field (Daniel 4:28-33). What lesson did the once mighty king learn? He himself said, "*And those who walk in pride He is able to abase*" (Daniel 4:37). The New Testament declares, "*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he will lift you up*" (James 4:10). We need to have the mind of Jesus. He showed us the model of humility by submitting to the Father's will (Philippians 2:5-8).

Finally, Nebuchadnezzar, even though he was a Gentile, was accountable to the God of heaven. The Law of Moses was given only to Israel, but there was always a law or code of conduct to which the non-Israelites of the Old Testament era were required to submit. Listen to what the prophet Daniel told King Nebuchadnezzar: "*Therefore, O king . . . break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor . . .*" (Daniel 4:27). Where there is no law, there is no transgression/lawbreaking (Romans 4:15). If the king was guilty of "sins" and "iniquities," then that means that he had broken God's law (1 John 3:4). So, here is a case that shows the Gentiles of ancient days were held accountable by the Lord.

More could be said about Nebuchadnezzar, but perhaps these ideas will stimulate you to further study.

-- Roger D. Campbell

## LET'S STAY FOCUSED

Some things that we do in life do not require special attention on our part. We can successfully complete some tasks while we have the radio blaring and are talking on the phone at the same time. Other tasks, though, require us to be focused totally on what we are doing. One that drives farm equipment must keep his attention on the task at hand. The same goes for a doctor that is performing open-heart surgery. In so many endeavors, for one to lose his focus can cause unpleasant results, even real disaster.

As Christians we, too, need to stay focused. We always need to keep in mind whom we are, what our purpose in life is, and where we are headed. If we fail to keep our focus, we will soon get off course and into great spiritual danger. On what should the children of God stay focused? Though there may be many correct responses to that question, we want to point out three obvious answers.

For one thing, ***God's children must stay focused on Jesus***. After all, He is the One Whom we are following! Jesus said, "*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me*" (John 10:27). If we are to "*follow his steps*" (1 Peter 2:22), then we need to pay attention to where His steps lead us. Yes, it is "Follow the Leader," but it is not a game. On the occasion when Peter walked on the water toward Jesus, in the beginning he walked with no problem. Every indication is that at first he was focused on Jesus and not the strong wind. However, when Peter "*saw that the wind was boisterous,*" his attention stayed on the potential danger and he was afraid (Matthew 14:29,30). Surely a key lesson from Peter's stroll on the water is for us to keep our eyes focused on the Lord and not the storms of life.

Most of us get involved in so many different activities in life. Some of them are activities at school, at work, or at home. Some of them may be personal acts of kindness or actually part of the work of the church. First century saints that were running "the Christian race" were exhorted to look "*unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith*" (Hebrews 12:1,2). May we ever be like the apostle Paul, who said of himself, "*For to me to live is Christ*" (Philippians 1:21). Let us all strive to do our best not to lose sight of the fact that Jesus needs to be the center of our focus. He died that we might live through Him. That ought to be on our minds each day. Stay focused on Jesus.

Second, ***followers of Jesus must stay focused on the word of God***. Today there is a push to get away from "too much Bible." We expect such from those outside of the Christ. It is disheartening, though, to see such an attitude among some members of the church. Some 21<sup>st</sup>-century saints spend little private time studying God's word and at the same time they want Bible classes turned into a social hour. They

yearn for shorter sermons and church bulletins that are filled with cute stories and social activities instead of Bible-related materials.

Brethren, we have got to keep our attention on the word of the living God! It is God's word that "*is able to save your souls*" (James 1:21). Nothing else can do that. It is God's word that serves as a lamp for our feet and a light for our path (Psalm 119:105). Nothing else can do that. It is God's word that can build us up and give us an inheritance among the sanctified (Acts 20:32). Nothing else can do that. Let us be like babies and "*desire the pure milk of the word, that you (we) may grow thereby*" (1 Peter 2:2).

Keep this thought in mind: it is impossible to stay properly focused on Jesus without staying focused on His teaching. When some of Jesus' disciples left Him to walk no more with Him, Jesus turned to the apostles and asked, "*Do you also want to go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life*" (John 6:67,68). To turn away from Jesus was/is to turn away from the source of the words of life! Remember, Jesus said, "*But why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?*" (Luke 6:46). Staying with the Christ means staying with His word. And, keeping focused on Jesus includes staying focused on His word.

Finally, ***followers of Jesus must stay focused on heaven***. Going to heaven after our earthly life is over – that is what it is all about! Going to heaven must be the goal that pushes us, the reward that drives us and on which our attention is focused. By faith Abraham "*waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God*" (Hebrews 11:10). He and others in his family desired "*a better, that is, a heavenly country*" (Hebrews 11:16). You and I must share that same longing.

Hear the truth of 2 Timothy 2:4: "*No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, in order that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.*" As soldiers of the Christ, we must not allow ourselves to become entangled or bogged down with the affairs of this earthly life. We must keep our focus on heaven! Jesus taught His disciples, "*But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*" (Matthew 6:20,21). May our desires ever be set on things above, where Jesus sits at the right hand of God (Colossians 3:1,2).

Satan would love to get us so distracted that we would not focus on the things that are most important. May God help us all to stay focused on Jesus, His word, and heaven as our final dwelling place.

-- Roger D. Campbell

## Hebrews 7:14 – “OUR LORD AROSE FROM JUDAH”

God speaks to us today through Jesus, so we need to *hear* His Son. God provides salvation through Jesus, so we need to *obey* Him. Jesus is the great first-and-last high priest of Christians, so we need to *serve* diligently under Him. The way of the Christ through His new covenant is superior to everything before and after it, so we need to stick with it. These great truths all are set forth clearly in the Book of Hebrews, an epistle that over and over again points to the supremacy of the new covenant arrangement.

For this study, we are jumping into Hebrews 7:14, where it is written, “*For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.*” Before we examine this verse, we need to take a look at the context in which this statement appears.

**The Context** – We can see a contrast, a conclusion, and a consequence. Verses one to ten of this chapter show the Christ as a priest after the order of Melchizedek. *The contrast* is between the Melchizedek-style priesthood and the Levitical priesthood (priests from the tribe of Levi and family of Aaron). *The conclusion* is spelled out: “*For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law*” (7:12). That is, since by God’s decree the priesthood was changed, it follows that there must be a different law, too (a new priesthood means a new law). What about *the consequence* of that change? Does it mean that God altered or adjusted the Law of Moses? No, what He did was make a change in terms of which law was in effect. Since that change took place, the old law is no longer binding, no longer in force, no longer the standard by which men and women are to serve Jehovah. The High Priest over the house of God (10:21) no longer comes from the tribe of Levi (7:13). Now, let us go back to verse 14, which we quoted above.

**“It is evident”** – This matter is one that is “openly evident, known to all, manifest” [Thayer, word no. 4271]. This is not a topic that is hidden in symbols or is so complex that we are not able to ascertain its meaning. It is a clear message, and this is the point: we are now under a new law, so let’s get on with it!

**“Our Lord”** – Peter’s message to the Jews on the Day of Pentecost was that the Father made Jesus both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). “Lord” means “he to whom a person or thing belongs, about which he has power of deciding; master, lord” [Thayer, word no. 2962]. Jesus is “the Lord” (John 21:7), the “one Lord” (Ephesians 4:5) to whom all Christians are to submit in all things. Notice also the personal element – He is “our” Lord. Like Thomas, each of us can refer to the Messiah as “*my* Lord and *my* God” (John 20:28; emphasis mine, rdc).

**“Arose from Judah”** – In the Old Testament,

“Judah” was first used as the name of a person (Jacob’s fourth son). Later “Judah” referred to a tribe (the descendants of Judah), then a land territory, and finally the Southern Kingdom was called by that same name. Whereas under the Law of Moses the priests in Israel were required to come from the tribe of Levi, our high priest is “*the Lion of the tribe of Judah*” (Revelation 5:5; Genesis 49:10).

**“Moses spoke”** – He was a prophet of God to the Israelites. He was the mediator between them and God. When Moses spoke to Israel, he was speaking on behalf of Jehovah. Thus, his message was not human, but divine, and one that had the authority and endorsement of heaven behind it. God did, indeed, speak through Moses, and those who chose to rebel against Moses’ message, were, in fact, rebelling against God Himself. That is how God’s chain of authority works. But, look further.

**“Moses spoke nothing”** about priests coming from the tribe of Judah – What did the Lord God say about the priesthood under the old covenant system? His designation was that the priests were to come from the tribe of Levi (Deuteronomy 18:1). There was no message from God about anyone from the tribe of Judah being a priest. Thus, we could say that God was silent about a Judahite being a priest. What did God’s silence indicate concerning that matter? His silence meant that no one from the tribe of Judah was allowed to be priest under the Law of Moses. God did not have to say directly, “No man from the tribe of Judah, no man from the tribe of Reuben . . . may serve as priest.” All of the Israelites understood this point: the fact that God “spoke nothing” about Judahites serving as priests meant that they were *not authorized by Him* to do so and thus, were *not allowed* to serve as such. God’s silence forbid a man from Judah being a priest under the arrangement of the old covenant.

Consider some modern application of this principle. In the New Testament, God “*spoke nothing*” about a human serving as “the Pope” of the church. Again, under the new covenant God “*spoke nothing*” about the church financing entertainment activities. What about using mechanical instruments of music when singing praises to the Lord? Our God “*spoke nothing*” in the New Testament about that, either. Just as the fact that God “*spoke nothing*” about a man from the tribe of Judah meant that no Judahite was authorized to serve as a priest, so God’s silence on the above-noted matters shows that they are unauthorized, too. Each of the items listed came from men, not God.

May the Lord bless you as you search the Scriptures and strive to apply them in your life.

-- Roger D. Campbell

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