

Ecclesiastes 1:9

That which has been is
what will be,
That which is done is
what will be done,
And there is nothing new,
under the sun.

THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

April-May-June, 2015 • Volume 46, No. 2

Déjà vu...Déjà vu

By AL DIESTELKAMP

Pardon my French, but lately I've been getting "a feeling of already having experienced a present situation," which is a definition of our title. It relates to how some brethren advocate for the broadening of our fellowship to include other "believers" regardless of whether they believe the doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins.

In two separate periods of time in my lifespan, this has been a troubling issue among brethren. Both times have eventually resulted in the departure of some into more ecumenical churches. In the mid-1950s, while I was still a teenager, I recall how my father decided to move from Minneapolis to the Chicago area specifically to fight a form of modernism that had been affecting the churches over the past couple of decades. Later, in his book *Here Am I, Send Me*, my father wrote about the fallout just in the Chicago area alone: "In seventeen years, seventeen gospel preachers quit the Lord's church, either to lose faith altogether, or to go to the most modernistic denominations."

I remember how that battle continued and became a motivating factor in the beginning of *Truth Magazine* in 1956. My recent *déjà vu* feeling sent me back to my bound volumes of early editions of the magazine in which there were lengthy exchanges and debates between brethren regarding the essentiality of baptism and the resulting spiritual fellowship issues.

Some of the statements made by those who eventually "went out from us" in the 1950s are frightfully similar to what we hear some brethren saying today. Consider this quote from one such preacher who was asked if the purpose of baptism and the Lord's supper can be realized apart from literal obedience to these rites. After giving lip-service to the importance of baptism

and saying that he "would not, knowingly, teach anyone to break the least of God's commands," he was asked whether he preached the essentiality of baptism. His response was: "I do not. I do not find the New Testament talking of essentiality. I do not believe that every unbaptized person will be eternally lost..." (*Truth Magazine*, Vol.1, No.6, p.7).

I don't know if the departures that were prevalent in the 1950s were widespread among brethren or if it was a problem peculiar to the Chicago area. I do know that by the end of that decade, the proponents of that error had migrated to more comfortable fellowships and the Lord's churches in the upper midwest experienced a brief period of growth and peace.

Whether the ecumenical mindset was eliminated among brethren for a time or merely went underground, I'm not certain, but by the 1970s and 80s the same attitudes were being espoused by some. I believe there *was* legitimate concern that, in our efforts to defend against Calvinism, the doctrine of salvation by grace had been somewhat neglected. Sermons, articles, and tracts refuted the grace-only doctrine with very little said about the positive side of salvation by grace.

To the credit of many, this imbalance in preaching and teaching was fairly well remedied, but—as so often happens—some went beyond the biblical teaching about grace and began advocating unity with some in the evangelical world. The most outspoken advocates of what they called "unity in diversity" eventually disassociated themselves with those of us whom they erroneously called "legalists."

The real issue under consideration is just who is and who isn't a Christian? The world attributes the name to anyone and everyone who merely *professes* Christianity, regardless of whether they actually *possess* it. Recently, we witnessed a report-

er who, attempting to pose a "gotcha" question, asked a potential political candidate whether he believed our current President is a Christian. How would you and I answer that question?

The use of the name as an adjective to describe any number of things, businesses and organizations (i.e., Christian music, Christian bookstores, Christian schools, etc.) has contributed to the careless use of "that noble name by which [we] are called" (Jas. 2:7). This misuse is so common that I fear that we have gradually succumbed to the practice. When Muslim extremists beheaded 21 men who professed to be Christians, the President was criticized for calling them "Egyptian citizens" instead of "Egyptian Christians." What did *we* call them?

I suppose some will view this as meaningless semantics. However, the problem arises when our accommodative use of the word "Christian" evolves into an emotional acceptance into spiritual partnership of people who have not fully submitted to the gospel. Gradually, the fact that many of our Bible-quoting, church-going, morally-upright friends have not submitted to scriptural baptism becomes less important, and the desire for unity obscures the biblical teaching that the only way one can be "in Christ" is by being "baptized into Christ" (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). Those "who do not bring this doctrine" are failing to "abide in the doctrine of Christ" (2 Jn. 9-11).

The desire for unity is an admirable trait if it is a unity based on submission to the teachings of Christ revealed in His word. We do our religious friends and neighbors no service by giving them aid and comfort in their error. What they need to hear is what other believers heard: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Ac. 2:38).

REVERSAL OF EXPECTATIONS

By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

The modern perception of what it means to be a disciple or follower of Jesus is, on the whole, very unlike what Jesus intended. Indeed, one has to wonder if the Son of Man returned today, “would He find faith on the earth?” (Lk. 18:8). In many respects, “Christianity” has morphed into something that reaches out to the “felt needs” of humanity and seeks to cater to what people want and have come to expect from “religion.”

Yet, when we examine Jesus as revealed in Scripture, we see a Person wholly unconcerned with meeting the expectations of any demographic. He knew that He would be rejected for His teaching, but He taught it anyway because it was the will of His Father. It was and is the truth. His disciples would do likewise for the same reasons and, for the same reasons, be similarly rejected.

Jesus challenged His disciples to exceed the righteousness of the leaders of the various religious parties, both liberal and conservative (Matt. 5:20). Jesus’ teaching did not conform to societal expectations. This is well illustrated in His teaching on the matter of marriage and divorce (Matt. 19:9,10). Indeed, His own disciples went on to remark that if what Jesus taught was true (and it was), it might be better not to marry. Simply put, Jesus’ kingdom would not be what most people expected. Matthew’s Gospel records events which illustrate reversals of expectations.

In 19:13-15, we see Jesus’ response to His own disciples’ efforts to prevent little children from coming to Him. While the ancient world saw children as blessings, it was primarily for what they would eventually contribute to the family economy. Thus, *little* children were often viewed as being more work than help. Contrary to the expectations of His disciples, Jesus

welcomed the little children. He then used a lowly child to represent what we must become in order to enter His kingdom. Jesus had previously taught the need to be born again from above (John 3:3). Such a re-birth would have all of us starting over as “little children” in order to be part of *His* kingdom.

In 19:16-22, a rich young man came to Jesus wanting to know what good thing he could do to have eternal life. Jesus told him that he should keep the commandments. The man wanted to know which ones. Jesus referred to some specific commands in the Law of Moses. The man said that he had kept those and wanted to know what he still lacked. Jesus told him to lay up treasure in heaven by selling all he had and following Him. The man went away sorrowful because he was very rich. The contrast begs to be made. The rich young man went away from Jesus, whereas the children came to Him. Jesus did not give the answer that the young man expected, and so he went away. Beware lest we have the same response.

In 19:23-26, Jesus warns His disciples that it is *hard* for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Isn’t wealth supposed to make everything easier? Yet, Jesus says wealth is an impediment to entering the kingdom. This amazed the disciples. If the rich can’t be saved, then *who* can be? It is likely they held to the idea that is still popular today that physical health and wealth is indicative of God’s blessing and one’s position in the kingdom. Nonsense. Jesus did not confirm that expectation then, and He does not now.

In 19:27, Peter observes that he and the other eleven apostles *had* left all to follow Jesus. He wondered what that would mean for them. Jesus’ reply (19:28-30) predicted that they would “sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” Space does not permit a full explanation of what Jesus might have meant by this, but suffice it to say that it would be “when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory.” After the resurrection of Jesus, Peter and the other apostles gave witness to the fact that Jesus had been raised to reign (Ac. 2:29-33) and the men of Israel who were cut to their hearts begged to know what they should do after having killed their Messiah. Who could have expected that these twelve men of lowly and despised backgrounds would be put in positions of authority in a regenerated kingdom to judge Israel? Indeed, this was a reversal of expectations.

Of course, the kingdom does not belong to the twelve apostles alone but to everyone who would likewise leave all for Christ’s sake. Jesus calls all of us to put the kingdom

of heaven first. Like the rich young man, many may say they want eternal life; but when the requirements of Jesus do not meet their expectations, many reject Him. Thus Jesus observed, “many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

The children (without wealth or power and, therefore, the last) were received by Jesus and represent what we must be to enter His kingdom. The rich young ruler (first by worldly standards) represents those who will not enter the kingdom though given the opportunity. God certainly cares about the rich and powerful, but those who are first in their own minds will be the last to forsake the little they have to follow Jesus. Beyond expectation, Jesus, the Son of God and therefore legitimately first by all standards, humbled Himself to the point of rejection, mockery, and death on a cross in order to rescue the helpless and hopeless, the last. We who would be His disciples are expected to deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow Him (Matt. 16:24).

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In our last issue we announced plans for a new congregation of the Lord’s people to be established in Springfield, Illinois.

Ken McDaniel is an experienced gospel evangelist. He, along with his wife Penny have signed a contract to purchase a house just a few blocks from the State Capitol. The property is located in an area zoned for business and will serve as their residence as well as the initial meetingplace for the church.



The Lord willing, by June of this year the new work will enjoy the benefits of a second evangelist when they are joined by their son Colton and his wife Keri.

It is unfortunate that in our previous issue we mistakenly provided an incorrect email address for people who wish to contact brother McDaniel. Please note the correct email address below:

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THINK ON THESE THINGS

Published quarterly in the interest of purity of doctrine and practice by the Diestelkamp family. Distributed free in quantities and as ability permits.

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It's Dark Out There

By DAVID DIESTELKAMP

A candle burned anonymously across from where I sat. The unusually bright Chicago winter day flooded the room with light, overwhelming the glow of the candle. The candle was superfluous, unnecessary, and useless, at least as far as giving light was concerned. Had the room been dark with no other source of light, we would not only have noticed the candle but would have valued and depended on its light.

Christians are candles that are often burning anonymously in the world. We find ourselves in settings where our light is similar to—or even outshined by—the relative good of others. Maybe we feel our light is superfluous, unnecessary, or even useless since it doesn't seem to make much of a difference in the world.

It is important to remember that faithful Christians shine as lights in the world whether or not it is acknowledged by the world (Phil. 2:15). Although the contrast between the Christian and the world—between the true follower and the faux disciple—should eventually become clear, the contrast is not always readily apparent. Upon closer examination, it can be discovered that what was thought to be an angel of light is, in fact, Satan himself (2 Cor. 11:14). But closer examination will sometimes be necessary, and not everyone will

do what is necessary. But remember, the popularity of Satan's feigned radiant veneer in no way taints the spectacular glory of the true angels of light.

We shine because God made us lights—period. We shine in the light and we shine in the darkness. Our radiance is not simply measured physically. Although obvious external differences will exist in the lives of Christians in contrast to those of the world, the most significant differences are spiritual. The greatest glory will be found in forgiveness, love, joy, peace, hope, long-suffering, and holiness...

I want to take a very dark turn here. Jesus said, "It is impossible that no offenses should come..." (Lk. 17:1). In Philippians 2:15 Paul stated what is obvious to us—we live in a "crooked and perverse generation." The "god of this age" (2 Cor. 4:4) is not the one true and living God because people do not "like to retain God in their knowledge" (Rom. 1:28). To make matters worse, the god of this world has blinded people "lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them" (2 Cor. 4:4). It's dark out there. And it's going to get darker.

Paul warned that "...evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:13). Dark—and getting darker—that's what Paul said. Peter said we shouldn't be surprised by it (1 Pet. 4:12). I'm not looking forward to

this, nor am I going to suggest that darker darkness is a good thing. But darker darkness affords greater opportunity for lights to shine, to serve their created purpose, and to be more useful.

I have heard people talk of the darkening of the world in terms of fear, wondering how the faithful will be able to shine their lights. Jesus says, even at the moment of greatest darkness, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden." Cannot be hidden! When the darkness darkens, the only thing that changes is how noticeable the light is. Maybe the darkness will mean lights will be ostracized by society (unfriended on FB?), mocked, arrested, and made homeless. My children and grandchildren may be destitute, afflicted, and tormented just like those in Hebrews 11. I'm still glad I have children and grandchildren, and I hope for them to have faith and the opportunity for the light of Christ to be seen in them in the clearest, most radiant way possible. Fear? Does light fear darkness, or does light see an opportunity to be useful, important, and relevant? May we all join those in the light "of whom the world was not worthy" (Heb. 11:38). May we "...walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8) when it is light and when it is dark, because that's what we are—children of light.

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Articles From the Days Gone By

GRACE and OBEDIENCE

By LESLIE DIESTELKAMP (1911-1995)

Paul wrote, "...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" (2 Thess. 1:7-8). Do you believe that?

There are many people who do not believe that a God of love would punish wicked people. They indulge in wishful thinking, judging God as they would men. However, the very same Bible that teaches us that "God is love" also says that he is "a consuming fire." Surely we should be able to see that he must punish the wicked if he is not only a God of love, but also a God of justice. His word cannot be regarded lightly. God cannot lie. He has from the beginning declared his hatred for sin, and it is not possible for him to compromise.

Some others think God will punish the wicked with annihilation. Some think total destruction will be the lot of the wicked. Thus, they try vainly to avoid the scriptural descriptions of *eternal* punishment. Truly, if heaven will be eternal, so then will hell be everlasting.

Then there are many who think God will punish the wicked but fail to recognize that all who neglect to obey will be included with the most corrupt. One need not be a murderer, a robber, a thief, etc., to be lost. The passage quoted above shows that it is the will

of God that all who do not submit in obedience to his will should be punished. We should be able to understand this because:

1) All have sinned (Rom. 3:23). Thus all responsible people have become guilty before God. They have come short of his glory and are not fit to be in his presence because of their sinful condition (Isa. 59:2).

2) By grace God provided a means of cleansing for the soul of sinful man (Eph. 2:8; Col. 1:14). The price man could not pay, God paid freely. By this means the stain of guilt may be removed from man's soul.

3) But pardon is offered only to those who believe and obey: "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (Jn. 8:24); "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..." (Mk. 16:16).

So, the God of love and mercy, being also a God of justice and truth, must reward the faithful because of his word, and likewise he must punish the wicked and disobedient because of that same true word.

Let us put our trust in his grace, but let us also demonstrate that we do trust him by complete surrender to his word. Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (Jn. 14:15). How can we say we love and trust the Lord if we refuse, decline or neglect to be obedient to him? He asked, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? (Lk. 6:46).

This article first appeared in the Aurora Bulletin, October, 1964

DAYS OF CREATION

By STEVE FONTENOT

Were the six days of creation 24 hour days or thousands of years? If the evidence shows these days to be days of approximately 24 hours each, then it is clear that the theory of evolution cannot be reconciled with the Bible. What is the evidence?

“Day” (yom)

While “day” (the Hebrew word, *yom*) is sometimes used for a period of time irrespective of the hours involved (e.g. Gen. 2:4), “Outside of the Genesis 1 case in question, the two-hundred plus occurrences of *yom* preceded by ordinals [e.g., one, “second” srf] all refer to a normal 24-hour day. Furthermore, the seven-hundred plus appearances of *yamim* [plural form of *yom* – srf] always refer to a regular day.” Walter L. Bradley and Roger Olsen, “The Trustworthiness of Scripture in Areas Relating to Natural Science,” ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Pruess (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub., 1984), p. 299 via *Acts & Facts*, May 1998.

“Evening And Morning”

The phrase “there was evening and there was morning” indicates one normal day. This is what Moses meant when he used the terms “evening” and “morning” elsewhere in his writings, e.g. Gen. 30:16—“evening” at end of a normal day’s work followed by night; Ex. 12:6—“at twilight,” lit., “between the two evenings” (see NASB

footnote), designating a time followed by a normal “night” (v. 8) and “morning” (v. 10); Ex. 18:13—“morning until the evening,” a normal day. This is how the people to whom and for whom Moses wrote would understand it (e.g. Josh. 10:26,27, Psa. 55:17, etc.). Assigning any other meaning to this phrase would be an assumption and contrary to the evidence.

Exodus 20:8-11

In Exodus 20:8-11 “day”/“days” occur six times, twice to refer to creation week. Is it credible that the two references to creation week mean thousands of years, but all the others refer to solar days, especially in view of the fact that the two references to creation week are based on the others and sandwiched by the others?

Natural Import Of The Language

Taken normally, the language of Genesis 1 favors instantaneous accomplishment (e.g., “Let there be light”; and there was light.”). This interpretation of the language accords with later Jewish writings: Psa. 33:6-9, “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made...For He spoke, and it was done” (Psa. 148:5,6; Heb. 11:3).

Difficulties With “Day” = “Ages”

Insurmountable difficulties arise by making the “days” thousands of years. How did the plants survive the years of darkness, as they were created on the third “day” and the sun on the fourth? How did the plants survive thousands of years without insects to pollinate them, for the plants were created on the third “day” and insects on the fifth?

Genesis A Historical Record

Genesis 1-3 is written as a historical record of real events and real people and is

so treated in the rest of Scripture. Compare the superscription in Genesis 2:4 with 5:1; 6:9, etc. Paul wrote that woman was created “from man” and “for man” (1 Cor. 11:8-9); that Adam was “first created, then Eve,” and that the woman was “quite deceived” (1 Tim. 2:13-14); that through “one man” sin and death entered the world (Rom. 5:12-14); that “the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness” (2 Cor. 11:3); that God had said, “Light shall shine out of darkness” (2 Cor. 4:6); and that “by a man came death... in Adam all die” (1 Cor. 15:21-22). To deny the historicity of Genesis is to cast a shadow of doubt on the reliability of the rest of the Bible.

Jesus’ Testimony

Jesus stamped His approval on the historicity of the Genesis account when He said, “He who created them from the beginning made them male and female” (Mt. 19:6). The day-age theory puts the story of Genesis two a long way from “the beginning.” Is Jesus the Son of God or not?!

Evolutionary Time

Geologists differ on the age of the earth by millions of years. No reliable dating methods exist to prove the earth older than what the Genesis record indicates. Even if “days” could be made to mean “ages,” it would not harmonize the Bible account with evolution.

The Bible versus Evolution

The Bible does not conflict with science, but it cannot be harmonized with the unproven theory of evolution. Which will you believe?

Read Psalm 19:7-11.

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