

MSB 216

MORE Seed and Bread

BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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A BIBLICAL REALITY CHECK

by M.B. Hammond

A *reality check* is just another way of saying, "What is the real truth?" Is your understanding of the Bible the real truth? What are some of the lies that Satan has perpetuated among men? Let us search in the pages of the Bible for our *reality check*.

I believe that God has spoken, and that the Bible presents the true words of God. With this foundation, the understanding of what He has said depends on our personal desire and continuous vigilance for the truth. The accountability for this was laid on our shoulders by the Apostle Paul who said, "**Study to show thyself approved unto God a workman who needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth**" (2 Tim. 2:15). In the Dispensation of Grace, i.e. the present period of God's silence, our problem is that we have no absolute source or authority to establish for us what is the truth. We define truth as "that which accords with the facts of Scripture." Thus, our first responsibility is to be thoroughly acquainted with Scripture from the beginning to the end. The more familiar we are, the more useful will be the Biblical *reality check*.

The *reality check* involves simple common-sense things like having clear definitions of the words being used, and having reference works, like *Young's Analytical Concordance*, to help us check how these words may be used in other contexts. We then observe the grammar, identifying subject, predicate, objects, subordinate clauses and modifiers. We need to ask the common questions, "Who? What? Why? When? Where? How?" which are so valuable to the *reality check* of our own language. When our own biases and preconceptions are under attack, we still must ask, "What is the truth?"

Many of these biases will come from our prior training, or be preconceptions from our past religious experience. We may find that we have real conflict in our minds about some doctrines we believed or some rituals we have practiced. But the real challenge comes when we say, "What is the truth?" If the truth is in conflict with our preconceived notions, are we ready and able to subscribe to the truth at any cost? I have listened to religious leaders making verbose sermons on very narrow slices of Scripture. Therein lies a serious problem because of this simple quatrain:

**Be sure that you have Scripture
For all you say or do.
And where Scripture is silent,
May you be silent too.**

Following WWII, The World Council of Churches convened a council of their representatives. I am sure they met with the best intentions, but they were unable to agree on the definition of the word "church." Subsequent attempts to define the word have come from men and not the Word of God. Going to the Bible, the word "church" is a translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*, which is compounded from *ek* (out of) and *klesia*, which is a form of the root verb *kaleo*, meaning to call or position a person, being an election of God. The student will find a passage in Hebrews 2:12, quoted from Psalm 22:22, which uses the Hebrew word *kahal* in the quoted passage. The student, who knows the Old Testament usage of this word, will understand that the *kahal* was not the whole people of Israel, but rather the leaders of thousands and hundreds whom Moses had given his blessing to judge the people and look out for them. This representative group of leaders and teachers were the assembly God brought together for the feast days and observance of the ritual in the Temple. So the word "church" really means those "out-called" for special service. In this day the "out-called ones" are those who believe in Jesus Christ without question or reservation. They know He is God's expression presented to man, so man can perceive the invisible and inaudible God, with their special service being in the time of the resurrection of the dead. This *reality check* causes us to ask questions about the doctrines, sacraments and rituals of these churches. Perhaps their roots in Scripture are as weak as the definition of the word "church" itself.

With regard to doctrines, our *reality check* asks, "Where does it say that when you die you go to heaven?" If you are not dead when you die, then we are mirroring Satan's lie to Eve, "Thou shalt not surely die" (Gen. 3:4).

Where does it say that you have an immortal soul? The fact is that Scripture says, **And God took man of the dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (spirit) and man became a living soul (Gen: 2:7).** Thus, man *is* a soul, and to say man *has* a soul is one of Satan's big lies. The reality of Scripture is difficult to accept if that was your preconception, but now you know that when you die the body returns to dust and the spirit returns to God who gave it (but with your specific imprint on it). When you die the soul is dead, it is no more until God returns you to life in the resurrection. The truth of resurrection is most glorious, for He alone is able to accomplish this. As Paul says, **"As in Adam all die, even so in Christ will all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22).** Thus, even those who have rebelled against God and are slated for destruction (the second death) will be raised to hear the judgment. The concept of going to heaven is not Scriptural, but the result of Greek philosophers, and idolatrous religions of the past who made the Greek word *hades* to mean the "place of the dead." Even the Hebrews believed this lie of Satan. This place, *hades*, had two compartments, one for good people and one for evil people. These myths may be interesting, but our *reality check* shows that even the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 15: 19- 31) is not a true doctrine, but rather, *Christ making a satire of the Pharisees' teachings*, showing them to be lies given to the common people to control them. The word *hades* is translated by many words in English including "hell," "grave," and "pit." Our *reality check* indicates it is not a place at all, but instead it is the state of death with resurrection in view. The equivalent Hebrew word is *sheol* and is conflicted with even more spurious meanings than *hades*. Such is the problem of translation difficulties with the *KJV*. The New American Standard does not translate this, but uses the word *hades*. Thus, the religious concepts of "heaven" and "hell" are not the truth, but erroneous mistranslations.

The *reality check* requires a clearer definition of terms. First, "heaven" means that which is over and above, and can refer to God, or in the plural form, the mighty ones, His host. The word "hell" is different. Derived from the old English term for hole (grave), religion has caused it to mean "the lake that bums with fire and brimstone" of Revelation 20:10. However, as a translation of *hades* and *sheol*, this misses the mark completely. That "lake" is a figure of the final destruction of those who know not God nor follow the Gospel of Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 1 :8). The *reality check* also finds the concept of "eternal conscious torment" unscriptural. The testing of Satan, the beast, and the false prophet is in relation to the eon and they fail. The final state of them and the unrepentant sinner is destruction. God is no monster,

but His judgment is in fact His righteous order in the world. Another *reality check* is needed for the word "salvation." When Martin Luther parted with the Catholic Church, he had found, from the books of Romans and John, that salvation was by faith in Jesus Christ, and not by the rituals, sacraments or confession of sins before a priest. Such things are meaningless next to the glory and power of faith in Christ.

The *reality check* is necessary, because so many of Satan's lies have been perpetuated in philosophy, science, politics and religion. Without some awareness of them, we are swayed by our emotions and not by the Word of God, the truth. Satan would have us to believe that all supernatural, miraculous or calamitous happenings are "acts of God." Reference to the work of Moses in bringing the plagues on Egypt shows clearly that Satan's power was in the magicians of Pharaoh. In this Day of Grace, God may do miracles, but they are always in secret and beyond logical proof. Since Satan is powerful, it is foolish to say that only God can do miraculous things. In fact, in Revelation 13 the false prophet is brought in by the beast to deceive the people with miracles and a talking idol. In the Day of Grace we cannot speak in tongues or heal the sick. We have none of the manifest powers of the Holy Spirit that the believers in the Acts Period possessed. Satan tempted Jesus Christ in Matthew 4: 1-11, and he used Scripture for his own purposes. Satan told Him to turn stones into bread, to cast Himself from a high tower so His angels might save Him, and finally he promised to give Him all the kingdoms of the earth if He would worship him. Christ's answers, quoted from **Deuteronomy**, were a *reality check*. He said, **Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (8:3), Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God (6:16), and Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve (6:13, 10:20).** The truth needs to be followed if the believer is to understand his Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

If John 3:16 makes Christ the Savior of men and 1 Timothy 2:5 claims that there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, then Jesus is complete and we need no other church, pastor, teacher, mediator, sacrament, or penitence. Christ is sufficient for all our needs. We are saved by His grace and not by anything we can do. Salvation cannot be earned. Your sins are all forgiven. You are complete in Him.

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