

# Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

Volume 31, Number 38

September 21, 2014



## God's Answer for a Troubled Heart

*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. (John 14:1-4, KJV 1900)*

If we examine the four accounts of Jesus' Incarnation, His time on Planet Earth as a man, based on each writer's focus, revealed by the amount of "Ink" he devotes to each season of Jesus' life, we quickly and clearly discover a strong emphasis in all four on the last week of Jesus' life, including His arrest, trial, crucifixion, and resurrection. That emphasis should nudge us to keep our focus on Him and the things that He accomplished during that time. Paul's preaching emphasized, "...Jesus, and the resurrection." (Acts 17:18b) We live in a time when focus on any specific Bible doctrine is strongly discouraged. We read much about "Seeker sensitive" preachers, preaching, and churches. Should we not rather focus, as Paul did, on Jesus and the resurrection? I've encountered several people who say, "Love unites; doctrine divides. Let's stop preaching doctrine and work on loving each other." The idea sounds appealing to our superficial senses. However, without exception, every time I ever mentioned a Bible doctrine that one of these folks disagreed with, the reaction I witnessed was anything but love. It smacked far more of the opposite.

Only one such doctrine will make the point. Polarized dispensationalism is so emotional that many very sincere preachers who do not believe it have given up altogether on preaching anything about the Second Coming because of the emotional reaction they must endure for their rejection of this idea. While I do not accept historical pre-millennialism, it should be noted that modern dispensationalism and historical pre-millennialism are not at all the same. As it is typically taught, dispensationalism had its beginning in the late 1820s with John Nelson Darby. It simply didn't exist prior to that time, leaving this doctrine some 1800 years too young to be a Biblical doctrine. It was generally rejected by historical Christians of most stripe until the early twentieth century with the publication of the Scofield Bible, a Bible that was published with beliefs and study notes by C. I. Scofield printed on each page, along with the Bible text. Scofield succeeded in popularizing Darby's ideas. Among many other errant ideas, this doctrine emphasizes its belief that the Jewish return to their middle eastern land in 1947 was fulfillment

of Biblical prophecy, wholly ignoring and contradicting Jesus' own words. (Matthew 23:39; does modern Israel acknowledge Jesus, the One who came in the "...name of the Lord"?)

As Jesus slowly moved the disciples from the mount of Transfiguration in the northern edge of the nation to Jerusalem for that last visit, we see Him increasingly teaching the disciples that He would be rejected and taken from them. At times, it appears that they may have caught a glimpse of His point, but mostly they seemed oblivious to it. On that last evening when He would be arrested later that night in Gethsemane, Jesus made the point so directly that the disciples could no longer mistake or misunderstand his point.

Location when Jesus taught the lessons contained in John, chapters 14-16, is not relevant to the truths that He taught. They could no longer doubt what He told them. Even then, they still didn't fully grasp His meaning, as evidenced in their overwhelming sadness at His words.

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. (John 16:12; add to this a study of the disciples' reaction to Jesus' words in these three chapters)

They would not begin to fully understand His teachings until the promised Holy Spirit descended on them at Pentecost with special power and revelation.

*Let not your heart be troubled.* For a moment, try to put yourself in the disciples' place. Increasingly over the last few weeks, Jesus has warned you that His personal presence with you is coming to an end. What then? The question looms greater and greater. The hostility of the leaders in power at Jerusalem is growing white hot by the day. Things are shaping up for what you perceive as a disastrous change, but Jesus seems perfectly calm, even as He talks more about His imminent experience of all these things. How can He be so calm when it seems to you that your whole world, your world that has Him in its center, is ready to implode, at least as you perceive it?

And, of all things that Jesus could say, at this confusing and emotional moment for you, he

speaks these words. How can you be anything but troubled in heart?

*...ye believe in God, believe also in me.* Every time I engage an in depth study of the Bible, I am increasingly thankful that we have a literal, word for word translation of the Bible in our King James translation. The simplest English explanation of this thought is not a mystery. "*...ye believe in God*" states a fact. Jesus tells the disciples something that they would have considered so basic as to need no reminder. Yes, they believed in God, the specific and only one God of Old Testament Scripture.

*...believe also in me.* And just as simply, these words issue a directive, a commandment to the disciples to do something that they apparently have not fully done at this moment. Do not understate their belief in Him. Each of them left his career and followed Jesus for the last three plus years. Yet even this degree of belief falls short of what Jesus here commands them. He is telling them to do something in words that build on the idea that they are not presently obeying. You don't command someone to do what they are already doing, do you?

What Jesus is commanding the disciples is possible and logical only if they fully understand that he is God Incarnate, God—fully and wholly God—living in a human body, the very point that John will make in the opening words of his written account of Jesus. (John 1:1-18) Jesus is commanding the disciples to believe in Him as God, no less than they believe in God as God. Jesus makes this point quite clearly in His discussion with Thomas, verses 5-9. Believing that Jesus was a righteous and insightful rabbi was not enough. Believing that He was a sent prophet from God was not enough. What Jesus commands in this verse rises immeasurably above any such belief. No more than we, those disciples could not possibly embrace Jesus' words regarding what He was about to do and where He was soon to go if they believed anything less about Him. They already believed in Him in many commendable ways. Would you abandon your career and livelihood and follow a man for over three years whom you did not believe? But clearly their belief in Him still fell short of what He here commanded. He commanded them to believe in Him in the same way that they believed in God. In short, they must believe that He is God Incarnate, God living in human flesh and dwelling among them. If He was anything less, they could not believe that He could go anywhere through death to prepare anything for them.

Even in the fresh shadow of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, to believe that they had lived with God in human flesh for these last three years was almost more than the disciples could imagine, much less truly believe. Yet this is precisely what Jesus commands them to believe. For them, death remained as the black wall. If they believed their Old Testament writings, death

certainly was not the end of existence for them. But the idea of Jesus dying and consciously doing things, even more miraculous things that they had witnessed Him doing while they were with Him, and then rising from the dead, was simply more than they could wrap their minds around. Study the Scriptures that reveal the disciples' reactions after Jesus' crucifixion. Ponder their surprise when they witness His presence, His physical, literal, bodily presence after His resurrection. One response from two disciples will bear ample testimony to their state of mind.

And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. (Luke 24:19-24)

When faced with the idea of resurrection, for the moment, the disciples fell prey to the same flaw as the Sadducees who denied the doctrine of the resurrection. They did not at that moment believe the Scriptures or the power of God.

Given the details of doubt and unbelief among the disciples immediately following Jesus' resurrection, we can more fully appreciate why Jesus so directly commanded them "*...believe also in me.*" They could only understand the full reality of the resurrection, His or theirs, on the premise of believing that He was God manifest in the flesh, including God over death, not a man subject to it. No mere man could possibly accomplish what Jesus increasingly tells the disciples that He intends to do. The modern occasional claim that Jesus never so much as suggested to the disciples that He was God, when weighed in the light of Scripture, is pure fantasy. Jesus taught this truth from the beginning. Only after the disciples were empowered by the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost did they begin to truly understand and believe this truth. Someone has said that, if you do not believe in Jesus and the resurrection, you are liable to fear everything; but if you do believe in Jesus and the resurrection, you fear nothing. So true.

Bellflower, California

Worship service each Sunday  
Joseph R. Holder

10:30 A. M.  
Pastor