

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

IGNORANCE OF GOD’S WILL

By Hugh Fulford

It is alarming to see so much ignorance of God’s will as set forth in the Holy Scriptures, the Bible. Even professing Christians often reflect a shocking lack of knowledge on some of the most basic spiritual and religious matters. I do not say this in an arrogant, haughty, or “know-it-all” kind of way. It is undoubtedly true that we are all ignorant, just on different subjects!

Sadly, there is an abysmal amount of ignorance of what God has actually said about any number of matters which have eternal consequences. Multitudes of people do not hesitate to express what they think, what they have always believed, or how they “see” or “feel” about a particular matter, but so often their views are far afield of what the Bible actually says about those matters. I once heard a lady in conversation with another say, “I do not know much about the Bible, but I know what I believe!” That is a glaring summary of the situation with many. I wonder if the lady had ever stopped to consider whether what she believed was what God had revealed in His word and what He wanted her to believe.

With reference to salvation from sin, the church, worship, everyday Christian living (words, actions, and attitudes), marriage, divorce, and remarriage, the second coming of Christ, heaven, hell, and a host of other Bible subjects there are all kinds of notions, many of which do not match what the Bible teaches about those matters. For example, it is commonly believed that if one will say “the sinner’s prayer” and “accept Christ into his/her heart” that person will be saved from his/her sins. Franklin Graham preaches this on a regular basis. He got it from his earthly father but not from the Heavenly Father! He never gives any scripture for it and never just simply reads or quotes what Jesus said in Mark 16:15-16, or what Peter told sinners to do in Acts 2:37-38, or what Ananias told Saul of Tarsus to do in Acts 22:16. I wonder why? Is his view of the matter above what God has said about the matter?

When it comes to the church, there is a terrible drought of knowledge as to what the Bible teaches about what the church is, the beginning of the church (when, where, and how), the undenominational nature of the church, who actually constitutes the church, the non-hierarchical organization and government of the church, the autonomy of each local congregation, the work of the church, and how the church maintains its distinctive purpose and identity. Denominationalism is defended without the slightest understanding of what the Bible actually teaches about that matter. And when it comes to what constitutes acceptable worship or if one has to attend the services of the church in order to be a faithful Christian, the “thinking” and the opinions are “all over the board.” When will we make an effort to find out what God has said about these matters? When will we again see Bible classes for adults and young people addressing this vital subject of the church as set forth in the Bible? Such classes used to be a staple in churches of Christ, but we now have a generation or more of members who knows little about the church as set forth in scripture. When will elders step up to the plate and take responsibility for what is being taught (and NOT being taught, but NEEDS to be taught) in the Bible classes of the congregation of which they have the spiritual oversight? Many of today’s elders themselves are badly in need of a thorough study of the church!

Many people think that a person can marry, divorce, and remarry as many times as he/she might want to, for whatever “reason” one may have for divorcing and remarrying, never realizing that God sets forth but one acceptable reason for divorce and remarriage. What God says about “living together” outside of marriage, so-called gay marriage, etc. are totally unknown to many people, or, if it is known, it is ignored, and one’s own “view” of the matter is rationalized. There is not a lot of practical difference between “ignorance” and “ignoring”!

In the Old Testament God said, **“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge”** (Hos. 4:6). In the New Testament Paul spoke of those who are **“alienated (separated) from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them”** (Eph. 4:18). Not very polite language to use in today’s politically correct culture where the thinking prevails

“I’m okay, you’re okay.” But what God says about these matters (and every other matter on which He has spoken) is nevertheless true, and man’s ignorance or ignoring of those matters will not change God’s word on those matters. On the day of judgment, ignorance or one’s own thinking or view of a matter will be a weak and unacceptable defense. As I have stated before, one’s ignorance or one’s own feelings and thoughts about a matter will never trump what God has actually said about a matter!

Jesus declared, ***“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonderful works in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who work iniquity’”*** (Matt. 7:21-23).

Now is the time to become informed of the will of the Father! Now is the time to be doing the will of the Father! ■

Judaism in the book of Acts

By John C. Robertson

An immediate problem the early church had to deal with was Judaism. Most New Testament epistles deal with this subject. There are varying definitions of Judaism. The way this study uses the term is a religious system that involves keeping the customs and established laws of Moses including temple worship, the sabbath, diet, circumcision, set feast, sacrifices, and submission to the high priest.

Many Jewish people became Christians; however, some had a hard time letting go of the Mosaic Law and circumcision. The grave consequence of Judaism was felt in the church. Religiously zealous Jewish Christians tried to force their convictions on Gentile Christians (see Acts 15:5). Those that did not fall in line were persecuted (see Gal. 6:12). The problem was that many Jewish Christians failed to understand that the law they held dear was simply a shadow of the truths to come through Christ (see Col. 2:16-17 and Heb. 8:1-5). Their gross mishandling of the law they loved brought about great trouble among the saints (see Acts 21:17-31 and Rom. 10:1-4).

Paul sets out to solve the issue of Judaism in the church by way of teaching and example. Paul taught, ***“28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: 29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit not in the letter; whose praise I snot of men, but of God”*** (Rom. 2:28-29). The Mosaic Law was not designed to save but to bring one to Christ (see Gal. 3:23-29 and Heb. 7:17-19). One may practice the Mosaic Law or not practice it (1 Cor. 7:19). Keeping Mosaic Law, in New Testament church times, would not get one any closer to God (Rom. 14). Consequentially, the apostle Paul would practice the Mosaic Law when in the presence of conscientious Jews but not do so at other times (see Acts 21:20-26). The point was that he would do whatever necessary to bring people to Christ (see 1 Cor. 9:19-23).

There is valuable application to Judaism today. When one demands something of others that God does not, they err (see Heb. 3:10 in its context). A great example of this is found at Acts 22. Paul is giving his defense before an angry Jewish mob. He tells them how he saw Jesus on the road to Damascus and that Ananias baptized him. He also told them that Jesus commanded him to go preach to the Gentiles. Upon hearing these words, the angry Jews demanded that he be put to death. They demanded that Paul be killed because Jesus, the Christ, told him to go preach to them (Acts 22:21-22). What God approved they disapproved and, consequentially, set themselves forth as God (2 Thess. 2:1-4).

Christians should keep Christ as the highest level of authority or chain of command in their mind (see Col. 1:18 and Heb. 1-2). Every word and deed must be put through the filter of Christ (1 Jn. 4:1). To permit another teaching of man to be level or above Christ is to err (Gal. 1:6-9). If you believe Christ to be King of God’s kingdom, then follow him (1 Kgs. 18:21). Salvation can be found only in Christ (Acts 4:12). ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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