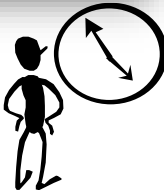


Inside this issue:

<i>Is Climate Change the End of the World?</i>	1
<i>Right Message, Wrong Audience</i>	2
<i>"Only in the Lord"</i>	4
<i>A.M. Sermon Outline:</i> Suffering for Christ's Sake	6
Duty Rosters	7
Announcements & For the Record	8



Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.
Worship 10:00 a.m.
(Or every other week)

Bible Study 4:00 p.m.
Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

Is Climate Change the End of the World?

By F. LaGard Smith

In the midst of a recent two-day “heatwave” in Britain, Prince Charles, a long-time environmental campaigner, was almost giddy about how right he had been to issue warnings for over fifty years. “As I have tried to indicate for quite some time, the climate crisis really is a genuine emergency, and tackling it is utterly essential.” BBC’s weather bulletins during the same “heatwave” reported not just the objective fact of the unusual 100-degree temperatures, but invariably (and always in a preachy tone) the “obvious cause:” climate change.

One doesn’t have to be a “climate denier” to note some inconvenient history. In the summer of 1911 (long before today’s “carbon footprints”), Britain endured a genuine heatwave with temperatures reaching 98 degrees, lasting... two months! In the States, a corresponding “sun siege” was even worse, but the UK’s historic weather patterns provide a more telling model.

If one traces back to the year 1000, there were sun-kissed vineyards all over southern England, meaning that, along with increased carbon usage came...cooling! Conversely, roll history back even further and one must ask: If fossil fuels are the cause of today’s rising temperatures, what explains the epic warming ending the Ice Age?

One would be daft to deny that there are global changes in climate, causing a rise in ocean temperatures, with consequent effects on coastal erosion, rain patterns, and even wildfires. Yet, the question of cause and effect remains. To what extent is today’s climate change caused by human activity, and to what extent does climate change simply reflect cyclical periods in Nature? The answer is the difference between responsible climate actions we can all embrace and radical environmentalism, having all the hallmarks of a reli-

gion...except for anything supernatural.

This is not a matter of science versus faith, but one faith versus another faith. Christian faith believes in a God who created this wondrous planet as a felicitous way-station for humanity on the path to a glorious life beyond. And the problem of sin, causing souls to be eternally lost unless saved by grace through obedient faith. And the coming of Christ to give his life so that we might live eternally. And his Second Coming, at which time (and not a minute before!) “the very elements will be destroyed by fire” (2 Peter 3:10)—not caused by global warming!

By contrast, the ideology of radical environmentalism typically believes that random natural forces, not God, brought this planet into existence; that a brief life on this planet is all there is; and that what needs saving is not lost souls but the planet. This naturalistic, faux religion—complete with its doom-and-gloom prophets and authoritative, bureaucratic priests—sees climate change as the looming Apocalypse, with salvation depending on (who else?) ourselves!

Given these two competing “faiths,” the radical change in culture’s religious climate is the climate change we should find most concerning. It’s no surprise that a younger generation weaned on a naturalistic explanation of life’s origins is rapidly moving away from godly faith to faith in environmentalism. Yet, worshiping Mother Earth rather than Father God prompts a familiar question with a slight twist: What will it profit a man if he saves the planet, but forfeits his own soul? Given life’s brevity, this is the true emergency. And tackling it before the Apocalypse of death overtakes each one of us is utterly and absolutely essential.

Right Message, Wrong Audience

By Matthew W. Bassford

At first glance, the narrative of Exodus 2:11-14 appears to be one of impulsiveness and immaturity. Moses, a 40-year-old resident of Pharaoh's household, decided to visit his Hebrew kinfolk. He sees an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, strikes the tormentor dead, and hides the body. The next day, he tries to break up a fight between Hebrews and gets a snarky retort about the Egyptian he killed yesterday. He realizes that the word is out and flees for his life.

However, the inspired reading of this story, as provided by Stephen in Acts 7:23-28, doesn't lay any of the blame on the future lawgiver. According to Stephen, Moses expected his people to understand that God had sent him to deliver them, but they missed the point. The exile of Moses in Midian, then, doesn't represent the 40 years in which he needed to grow up. Instead, it represents 40 years of unnecessary suffering by the Israelites because they rejected the one God had chosen to lead them to freedom.

As Stephen reveals during the rest of his final sermon, this is not a unique prob-

lem for the Jews. Their fathers had rejected God's chosen deliverer Joseph, and they themselves had rejected God's chosen deliverer Jesus. Of course, this problem isn't limited to the descendants of Abraham. To this day, members of every nation under heaven reject those whom God has sent to teach them.

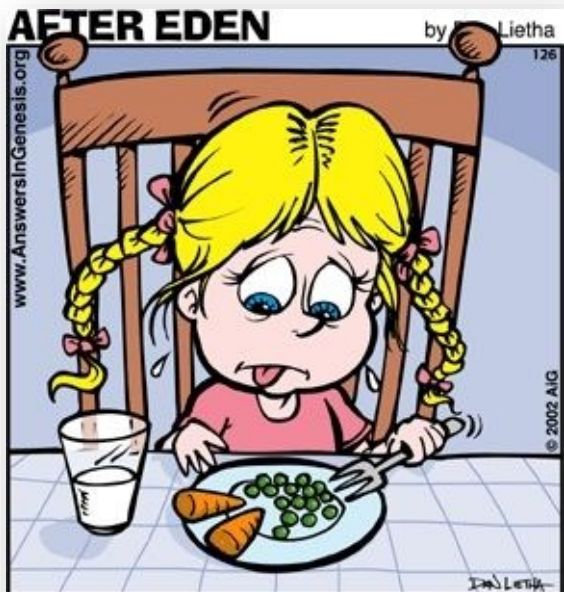
Let's look at this first from the perspective of the teacher. Today, many Christians consider evangelism to be work best suited for highly trained diplomats. You have to say everything just right and give no grounds for an offense if you want to lead someone to the Lord. In many cases, they base their beliefs on their own experience. They themselves tried to lead a sinner to Christ, they didn't say everything just right, the sinner rejected the gospel, and they blame themselves for it.

Generally, the explanation is much simpler. Moses certainly didn't do everything exactly right in his first attempt to rescue the Israelites, but it was still their fault for rejecting him. In the same way, if we don't present the gospel in exactly the right way and people reject it, they're not rejecting our approach. They're rejecting the gospel. They weren't ready to hear it, and they may never be ready to hear it.

Sometimes, though, the shoe is on the other foot. Someone else has challenged what we believe. Maybe they're young and a little bit arrogant, like Joseph. Maybe they come from a different background than ours and seem stuck-up, like Moses. Regardless, we decide they're not worth listening to, and we close our ears to their position.

Although this is a natural way to behave, it is very dangerous. Truth from the lips of anyone remains the truth, no matter whether we like them or not. If we pay more attention to the messenger than the message, our rejection of truth may cost us our souls.

In fact, in both scenarios, the gospel ought to be the most important element. When we try to teach others, we must put our trust in the gospel and rely on it to do its work. We aren't going to change matters much one way or the other. So too, we must allow the gospel to do its work in our hearts. If that comes at the price of over-looking annoying behavior by someone else, it's a small price to pay indeed!



Sally was sure that IF there had been forbidden **VEGETABLES** in the Garden of Eden instead of forbidden fruit, Adam & Eve wouldn't have eaten them.

“Only in the Lord”

By Al Diestelkamp

I recently received a question from one of our readers regarding the application of the apostle Paul’s instructions about marriage options for widows, specifically asking if the same should be expected of widowers. Paul writes, “A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives, but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to marry whom she will, only in the Lord” (1 Cor. 7:39). Paul then gives his personal judgment that she would be happier if she were to remain unmarried (v.40).

The key to understanding what is expected of a widow who wants to marry is to figure out what is meant in this passage by the phrase “only in the Lord.” In order to determine what the word “only” indicates, we must first determine what the phrase “in the Lord” means in this passage. This is not easy since the phrase is used more than 100 times in the New Testament but does not always have the same meaning. The translators of the New International Version (NIV) tried to settle the issue for us by wording it “but he must belong to the Lord,” and the New English Translation (NET) followed suit with “only someone in the Lord.” However, those are interpretations rather than translations.

There are three differing interpretations among Bible believers as to what is expected of a widow who wants to marry:

1. The phrase “in the Lord” is equivalent to “in Christ.” So if she wishes to marry, she must choose a man who is a Christian.
2. The phrase “in the Lord” means “in accord with the Lord’s will,” so she is free to marry whom she wishes as long as both he and she have a right to marry.
3. This instruction is limited to “the present distress” and is no longer applicable.

I will not try to keep you in suspense as to my conclusion—I believe Paul is answering some specific questions that he received in a letter from the Corinthian brethren (7:1). His answers included instructing a widow who wants to marry to do so only if the one she wishes to marry is a Christian. If my conclusion is correct, I see no reason why he would have answered differently if the question had been asked about a widower. Let me comment on the other proposed interpretations.

A common argument for “only in the Lord” meaning in accord with God’s will is an appeal to similar wording in other of Paul’s writings, especially his instruction to children to “obey their parents in the Lord” (Eph. 6:1). The most common interpretation is that he was telling children to obey their parents as long as what is demanded is in accord with God’s will. However, consider that Paul was writing to Christians in Ephesus where the letter was most likely read in their assemblies where children could be admonished to obey their parents who, as Christians, could be trusted to command what

was right.

Another example of similar wording is Paul's admonition to wives to "submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord" (Col. 3:18). This might be telling wives that obeying their husbands is "fitting" for one who is in Christ.

I readily admit that children should obey their parents and wives should obey their husbands only so long as what is required is according to God's will. This could be what Paul meant, but it is not the only possible conclusion. There are many examples of the phrase "in the Lord" clearly referring to those "in Christ." In this very context Paul writes, "For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman." In the last chapter of Romans, Paul uses phrases "in the Lord" and "in Christ" interchangeably. Note the following: "Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers In Christ Jesus" (16:3); "Greet Andronicus and Junia...who were in Christ before me" (v.7); "Greet Amplias, my beloved in the Lord" (v.8); "Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ" (v.9); "Greet Appelles, approved in the Lord..." There are more—check out verses 11, 12 and 13.

The "present distress" was Paul's reason for advising Christians to "remain as he is" (1 Cor. 7:25ff). It may be that Paul's "judgment" stated in verse 40 is due to the distress at that time, but it does not necessarily follow that "only in the Lord" was specified for that reason.

It is my conviction that any faithful Christian (whether a widow, widower, or otherwise single) would want to marry a Christian, and this is consistent with God's expectation throughout all generations. The Old Testament, though not a law for us, is our "tutor" (Gal. 3:24), and God's attitude toward His people marrying outside of His people is evident. The apostle Paul was a single man (by choice), but he made it clear that he had the "right to lead about a believing wife" (1 Cor. 9:5). It is significant to me that the Holy Spirit included the word "believing" regarding Paul's right.

The marriage relationship is the most intimate relationship between two people. The wife is a man's suitable "helper" (Gen. 2:15) in ways more than just physically. The Christian should choose someone who will "help" him/her go to heaven. The unbeliever is headed in a different direction than the faithful Christian is. Even if you disagree with my conclusion, I would hope that we could all agree that godly wisdom should motivate a Christian to choose a mate with the same goal—eternal life. So I leave you with the admonition of the apostle Paul: "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15-16).

