

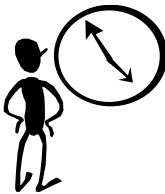
THE BATTLE CREEK BULLETIN

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Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study	9:00 a.m.
Worship	10:00 a.m.
Worship	5:00 p.m.
(every other week)	

Wednesday:

Bible Study	6:30 p. m.
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Why People Reject Christ

By Jefferson David Tant

We live in a nation today that is becoming less and less “religious,” which includes an increasing number of those who reject Christ, as they may believe he is a myth, or if a real person, certainly not a divine being. Let us examine what may be behind what is happening in our nation.

Is there sufficient evidence for an intelligent person to believe in Christ? There is truly an abundance of evidence, and when we have examined it, I trust that our own faith will be strengthened and that we will be equipped to help others to have this same faith. A study of the evidence is not the theme for our study, as we are considering why people reject Christ and the principles He taught.

Some People Reject Christ out of Ignorance

Often this is a self-imposed ignorance, which was the basis of the ignorance mentioned in Romans 1:18-23, “*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.*”

Sometimes people will say, “I don’t want to hear it,” as a discussion about the Bible takes place. In some way, it is

felt that this relieves a person of responsibility if there is no knowledge. Thus, they assume “ignorance is bliss.”

But ignorance doesn’t excuse one of responsibility. Try that with a policeman who stops you for going 70 miles per hour in a 50-mph zone. “Oh, I didn’t see the speed limit sign.”

Others Have a Problem with Pride

This is often the hindrance for those who have “much learning” which has come from some of our institutions of higher (or “lower”) learning. It is simply amazing to see the lengths to which our institutions will go in order to destroy faith in God. One of my professors in college, J. D. Thomas, received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago some years ago. He was told that he was probably the last person who believed in God and would receive such a degree from the university. In effect, he was told: “We don’t believe a person is a fit candidate for a degree from this institution if he goes through our program and still believes in God.”

It is sad to see so many of our young people lose their faith when they go to great universities. A good percentage of believing students do actually lose their faith in these schools. Professors openly state their goal to destroy the faith of believers in their classrooms, and they will openly ridicule such students.

My own children experienced ridicule for their beliefs even in high school. The world looks upon a belief in God as childish and superstitious, and only uneducated simpletons are religious. In truth, it’s the other way around.

“For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.’ Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God. But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctifica-

tion, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, 'Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord'" (I Corinthians 1:18-31).

Pride was a great problem with the Jews in Jesus' day. "For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, 'He has blinded their eyes and he hardened their heart, so that they would not see with their eyes and perceive with their heart, and be converted and I heal them.' These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him. Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God" (John 12:39-43).

A Third Great Hindrance is a Moral Problem

This is often the problem that may underlie the other excuse. Jesus outlined this problem in John 3:19-20: "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed."

Some years ago, my wife and I went to call on a young wife who had left her husband and was involved in an adulterous relationship. She didn't want anyone to find her, so would only give her phone number out, not her address. We traced the phone number to a location and went to see her. She had been brought up with God-fearing parents, had been a faithful Christian since her baptism into Christ, and had been active in the teaching program of the church.

When Flora and I began to talk with her, one of her first statements was "I don't think I believe in the same God you do anymore." What was the problem? It was not an intellectual problem, but a moral problem. The only way she could justify her sin was to reject belief in the one who defined her actions as sinful.

So often those who come up with their "intellectual" arguments against the existence of God are only covering for the moral problems in their lives.

Aldous Huxley was a great philosopher and thinker who was an avid atheist. In his life, he has a great influence in turning many away from belief. Near the end of his life, he wrote a revealing confession in one of his books.

"I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning. Consequently assumed that it had none and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption. The philosopher who finds no meaning in the world is not concerned exclusively with the problem in pure metaphysics, he is also concerned to prove that there is no valid reason why he personally should not do as he wants to or why his friends should not seize political power and govern in a way that they find most advantageous to themselves. For myself the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation, sexual and political."

What an honest admission! Whatever intellectual problems he had with the existence of God and absolute truth and values were basically a cover-up to excuse his sexual and political practices and views.

They Weigh Too Much for Me

By Jefferson David Tant

Have you ever heard of Samuel Plimsoll? He was a member of the British Parliament back in the 1860s and 1870s. During this time there were some serious problems in the shipping industry. Numerous ships carrying loads of cargo were sinking in the ocean when they encountered severe storms.

Plimsoll took on the challenge. He devised a way to secure the safety of ships by determining how much weight a ship could carry before being in danger on stormy seas. A mark was placed on the hull of the ship, and then the ship was loaded to the point where that mark was at sea level, no more load was put on the ship. That brought about a great change in the shipping industry.

There is no telling how many ships, cargo, and lives were saved by this “Plimsoll Mark.”

Question: Do you ever feel burdened with sin? Do you feel that you can't resist temptation and from time to time you sink into the sea of sin? Well, the truth is, we have all sinned. After our birth, when we reach the age of accountability and can make choices, from time to time we make the wrong choice. The apostle John wrote: *“If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us”* (I John 1:10).

Does that mean that we are predestined to sin? That we cannot help ourselves? Are we born that way, as some denominations teach that we are born in sin? We won't have a long discussion about “born in sin” here, but note one obvious problem with that doctrine. We know that Christ was born into this world as we are. He took on flesh. He was human. He got hungry. He got tired. Was he born a sinner? Obviously not! Could he sin? Obviously yes! If not, what was the point in Satan tempting Christ three times as recorded in Matthew 4:1-10? If Jesus could not be tempted to sin, then this was all a waste of time and proves nothing to us. But there is a lesson we can learn from this incident, and that is that we have the power to resist the devil just as Christ did. We have the ability and the power to say “No!”

That brings us to a consideration of I Corinthians 10:13: *“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”*

God is faithful. He keeps His promises, which include protecting us. Now, we still have free will, and we can decide to sin, but we can't say “I couldn't help it.” Years ago, a TV comedian named Flip Wilson was known for his oft-repeated statement when

he got in some trouble: "The devil made me do it!" No, Satan can't make us do anything. We still have the power of choice.

In a sense, we might say that God has placed a Plimsoll mark on us. He has promised that He will not allow Satan to load us with such strong temptations that we will sink into the ocean of sin. God knows us and knows just how much of a load we can bear before we give into temptation and sink into sin. So we can't honestly say, "I couldn't help it," for God has provided us with the power to say "No."

We have another promise of God's help to overcome in II Peter 2:9: "*Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment.*"

We are given instructions that will help strengthen us when we are in the fight against Satan and sin. "*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places*" (Ephesians 6:10-12).

And just what is the armor of God? Paul describes that armor, which gives us a sure means of overcoming Satan, and that is by equipping ourselves with full armor to help us to overcome our enemy. "*Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints*" (Ephesians 6:13-18).

We also have Peter's admonition: "*Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world*" (I Peter 5:8-9). We can resist Satan. We have the power to do so.

A ship's captain has the power to ignore the Plimsoll mark and overload the ship, and God has given us the power of free will. We can ignore God's promise and ignore the "line" God has put on us for our protection and choose to sin, but there are consequences to pay.

"*For my iniquities are gone over my head; as a heavy burden they weigh too much for me*" (Psalms 38:4).