

view

February 6, 2005

This Week's Agenda

February 6, 2005

The Lord's Day

8:30AM & 10:15AM

Sermon: David Posey

5pm Sermon: David Posey

5:30pm: Classes for all ages from 18 months and up

Adult Classes

- Auditorium: Sunday - David Carrozza, Various Topics.
- "Basics" Class (see Dennis Wade)
- Room 11-12: Young Adults, Topics - David Posey, Sr.

Wednesday

10 AM Wednesday: OT History, at building.

7:30 PM - Classes for all ages 18 months and up.

Adult Classes

- Auditorium: Dan Hamilton, Discipleship
- "Basics" Class (see Dennis Wade)
- Room 11-12: Young Adults, Topics - David Posey, Sr.

Prayers...

Oh Boy!!

Allison Horak gave birth to Job and Jonah's little brother, John Sebastian Horak III, on Friday; he was 7lbs, 11oz. Welcome "Trip" (ask Allison). Everyone is doing fine at last report, but pray that Allison's recovery continues and the baby grows.

Sickness, Injury, Continuing Health Problems

Jim Everett, a preacher from Texas, friend of Bill Mosely, who once held a meeting here, has been diagnosed with terminal liver cancer. He has only a couple of weeks to live and he just got the news on Friday.

Vivian Mowrer is home from the hospital and doing well. Continue to keep her in mind as you pray so that she will continue to grow.

Please pray for Cathy Fulton who has Parkinson's disease; also keep Hank in your prayers as he has been dealing with sleep apnea.

Becky Woolpert was hospitalized for a time after returning home from a trip. She is home now and doing better. Continue to pray for her.

Continue prayers for Jamie Cole; Dave Fulton's



Bible Reading This Week

Sunday - Exodus 32-34; Proverbs 6
Monday - Reflection
Tuesday - Exodus 35-37; Proverbs 7
Wednesday - Exodus 38-40; Proverbs 8
Thursday - Acts 1-3; Proverbs 9
Friday - Acts 4-6; Proverbs 10:1-16
Saturday - Acts 7-9; Proverbs 10:17-32

mother, Monica (Monroe, WA); Tom Royston; Ken McClelland (cancer); Karen Gorden; Sharon Jones; Becky Woolpert; Margaret Everett (cancer); Phil Roberts (cancer); Laurie Ann Reagan (cancer); Cheryl Wilson (cancer); Bill Fling (heart problems); Chris Hamilton (friend of Justin Ivie, cancer); Peggy Olsen (Cameron Carrozza's friend's mother).

Erick (that is the correct spelling!) McAdams' address in Oregon is: 2703 SE 66, Portland, OR 97206.

Christians Serving in Iraq

Philip Cain, just deployed to Iraq, and the other men who are serving in Iraq: Steve Reis, Titus Cain, Travis Dusenberry (Joanne Garner's grandson), Paul Hitchen. Trey is expected home very soon.

Expectant Mothers

Five to go: Kimmie Warshaw, Sally Deschler, Kristen Sanderson, Melissa Fields and Michelle Caisse.

Out of Town.

We was not informed of any who are out of town.

Group Meetings

The first group meetings will begin tonight and continue throughout the quarter. We hope you'll participate and enjoy the meetings.

Background Notes on our Bible Readings

The Canon

In classical Greek the word “canon” signifies properly, “a straight rod,” or “a carpenter’s rule.” In the early ages of Christianity, it was used with considerable indefiniteness of meaning, though generally denoting “a standard of opinion and practice.” Later it came to be used as a testing rule in art, logic, grammar, and ethics. Still later the sacred writings received the name of the “Canon of the Scriptures.” We are using the term to mean *the canon of truth*, referring to the restriction of the number of books that compose the sacred volume. The term was first applied to the Bible (as we now have it) in the year 367 AD.

The sense in which we use the word in this article is that those books are canonical which Christians have regarded as authentic, genuine, and of divine authority and inspiration. These books are to be found in the Bible — in the Authorized Version of 1611, the Revised Version of 1881 and 1885, and in the American Revised Version of 1901 and in subsequent versions through the years.

By *uncanonical* we mean those books that are not included in the canon, such as the books of the Apocrypha, the Shepherd of Hermas, the Epistle of Barnabas or the Gospel of Thomas.

Why was a Canon of the Bible necessary?

So long as the living voice of prophets and apostles was to be heard, there was no pressing need of a canon of Scripture. Under the inspiration of God they knew what was inspired, and what was not. But as soon as these men were dead—and with them inspiration ceased—it became necessary that their writings be gathered together to know what

were their messages to the churches, and to preserve those writings from corruption.

Another reason why a canon was necessary was to preclude the possibility of additions to the number of inspired works. Already numerous writings were extant purporting to be inspired. Hence the question arose, “Which of these are really inspired? What is the extent of inspired literature?”

A third reason for the formation of the canon is in the fact that the Emperor Diocletian issued an edict in 302 that all the sacred books should be destroyed by fire. Hence the question arose as to which books rightly deserved to be considered inspired and sacred.

How was the Canon of the Bible formed?

The formation of the Old Testament Canon.

The formation of the Old Testament canon was gradual, and was composed of the writings which spread over many centuries.

Moses commanded that the books of the law be placed in the ark. This, with the addition of the book of Joshua, was done, and the sacred books were kept there during the wilderness journey, and also were in the ark during its permanent residence in Jerusalem. (Deuteronomy 31:9, 26, cf. 2 Kings 22:8; Joshua 24:26; 1 Samuel 10:25.)

After that, the historical and prophetic books from Joshua to David’s time were gathered and placed in the temple. On the construction of the temple, Solomon deposited in it the earlier books (II Kings 22:8, Isaiah 34:16), and enriched the collection with inspired writings from his own pen, and also some prophetic writings. So we find

Daniel referring to “the books” (9:2) and Isaiah to “the book of the Lord” (29:18, 34:16).

After Solomon’s day a succession of prophets arose, Jonah, Amos, Isaiah, Hosea, Joel, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Obadiah, and Habakkuk. These all flourished before the destruction of the temple, and enlarged the collection of existing sacred books by valuable additions.

After the Babylonian capture, when the temple was rebuilt and worship reestablished, the writings of Haggai and Zechariah were added.

About fifty years after the temple was rebuilt Ezra made a collection of the sacred writings (Nehemiah 8:2, 3, 14). To this collection were added the writings of Nehemiah, Malachi, and Ezra. Nehemiah gathered the “Acts of the Kings and the Prophets, and those of David,” when founding a library for the second temple, 432 B.C. (See II Maccabees 2:13).

The canon of the Old Testament, in the form we now have it, was the work of Ezra and the Great Synagogue. The ancient Jewish writings bear this out. The Great Synagogue was composed of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. There is no doubt but that such a collection of books existed in the time of our Lord and the apostles (Luke 24:27, 44).

The New Testament Canon

The New Testament canon was gradually added to that of the Old Testament. But it was a considerable time after our Lord’s ascension before any of the books contained in it were actually written.

The first and most important work of the apostles was to deliver a personal testimony to the chief

facts of the Gospel history (Mark 16:15; Acts 1:21, 22). A cycle of selected representative facts sufficed to form the groundwork of their oral Gospel (I Cor. 15:1-10).

But in the course of time many endeavored to commit to writing this oral Gospel (Luke 1:1-4). So long as the apostles were still living, the necessity for written records of the words and actions of our Lord was not so pressing. But when the time came for their removal from this world, it became critical that the authoritative records should be established. Thus the Gospels came into existence, two by apostles themselves, and two by friends and close companions of the apostles.

But already had arisen another kind of composition. Founders of churches, often unable to visit them personally, desired to communicate with their converts for purposes of counsel, reproof, and instruction. Thus arose the Epistles, which were sent, from time to time, to churches to meet special needs and emergencies.

The persecution of Diocletian (302 A.D.) intensified the question of the sacred literature of the church. The persecutors demanded that the Scriptures should be given up. This the Christians refused to do. Hence the question became urgent—What books are apostolic? The answer lies in our New Testament. There were at that time many false and spurious gospels and epistles. Careful, prayerful, and deliberate examination, however, proved which were genuine and which were false. The genuine were received by the church as the inspired writings of the apostles and others whose names the books bear. Thus arose the New Testament canon.

The books called “Homologoumena” and “Antilegomena.”

In the study of canonicity a word or two must be said regarding these

terms, and what is meant by them.

At the time of the formation of the New Testament canon twenty out of the twenty-seven books were readily and universally accepted as genuine, and therefore called “Homologoumena” (i.e. acknowledged). These twenty books were the four Gospels, the Acts, the epistles of Paul (except that to the Hebrews, if he wrote the book), and the first epistles of John and Peter. The other seven books—Hebrews, II and III John, II Peter, Jude, James, Revelation—were disputed for a time by particular Christians, and were therefore called “Antilegomena” (or disputed).

The question about these books was not so much that of the canonicity of the writings, as whether they were really written by the men who were called their authors. Hebrews bore no name of its author, and differed in style from the acknowledged Pauline epistles; II Peter differed in style from I Peter; James and Jude styled themselves “servants,” and not “apostles”; the writer of II and III John called himself an “elder” or “presbyter,” instead of an “apostle”; Jude recorded an apocryphal story. For these reasons these books were not at once allowed their place in the canon. After a deliberate examination, however, they were at last received as genuine, the very delay proving the close scrutiny which their claims had undergone. At the beginning of the fourth century they were received by most of the churches, and at the end of that century they were received by all.

The Apocryphal Books.

These books derive their name from a Greek word, *apokryphos*, which means “hidden.” They are so called because they are (1) hidden; (2) of unknown authority; (3) spurious. They were not recognized as inspired books by the Jews, who regarded them, however as having high au-

thority, and held them in high esteem as being a valuable history of their nation. Although they were carefully distinguished from the canonical Scriptures, their use was not only allowed, but many of them are quoted in Talmudical writings. They were given a place by themselves in the sacred volume, but with the disclaimer that they were not to be regarded as of equal authority with the books of the canon. In Bible versions that include them, such as the Jerusalem Bible, they are placed between the Old and New Testaments. The Roman Catholic Church regards them as inspired so you will find them in their versions of the Bible.

The Apocrypha contains fourteen books: I and II Esdras, Tobit, Judith, the rest of Esther, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, the Song of the Three Children, the Story of Susannah, Bel and the Dragon, the Prayer of Manasses, and I and II Maccabees. A few of the so-called “church fathers” quoted some of these books as canonical, but they were not generally regarded as such, nor were their titles included in any list of canonical writings during the first four centuries after the birth of our Lord. It was not, indeed, until the Council of Trent, in 1545, that they were declared to be an integral portion of Holy Scripture as acknowledged by the Roman church.

“Philo,” says Angus, “never quotes them as he does the sacred Scriptures; and Josephus expressly excludes them. The Jewish church never received them as part of the canon, and they are never quoted either by our Lord or by His apostles; a fact the more striking as St. Paul twice quotes heathen poets. It is remarkable, too, that the last inspired prophet closes his predictions by recommending to his countrymen the books of Moses, and intimates that no other messenger is to be expected by them till the coming of the second Elijah (Mal. 4:4-6). Internal evi-

dence, moreover, is against their inspiration. Divine authority is claimed by none of the writers, and by some it is virtually disowned (2 Mac. 2:23; 15:38). The books contain statements at variance with history (Baruch 1:2, compared with Jer. 43:6, 7), self-contradictory, and opposed to the doctrines and precepts of Scripture.”

For what, then, can the Apocryphal books be esteemed useful? In the Church of England some parts of them are read “for example of life and instruction of manners, but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine.” By no Protestant church are these writings held to be the rule of faith, and contrasted with the canonical books, they are utterly without authority. From a historical point of view they are of value in showing the condition of the Jewish people, and relating certain events that intervene between the closing of the Old Testament and the opening of the Christian era.

These facts sufficiently indicate the course of the argument by which the canonicity of the sacred Scriptures is proved. Let it be proven that these books were written by the men whose names they bear, and that these men wrote under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, and the canonicity of the Bible is a settled fact. We have, therefore, a right to believe that the Bible is the supreme and ultimate rule for faith and life by which we may govern our lives in order that they may be in accordance with the revealed will of God.

Adapted, Author Unknown

Is true, New Testament Christianity possible?

We believe that a local church can function in exactly the same way as churches in the first century? Our goal is to return to the original plan for the church, as Christ intended when He built it. Why do we try? Because a restoration of true New Testament Christianity is the only way to avoid the confusion and division we witness in the religious world today.

Long ago, Jeremiah said, Jeremiah 6:16 Thus says the Lord, “Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, Where the good way is, and walk in it And you will find rest for your souls.” (Jeremiah 6:16).

All we want to be are Christians only – nothing more, nothing less. Christians only, meeting with other Christians only.

This is important because Christ, the Author of Christianity, expects it: Mt 16:16; 28:18-20. He has the authority. He built the church and only He can change His plan for the church.

He gave the apostles authority (Eph. 2:20). Man is not capable of building a “church of Christ.” Only Christ can do that and only Christ has done it. We want to be *Christians*.

We have a blueprint for bringing the reality of New Testament Christianity to the 21st century: The New Testament. Sensible and objective interpretation of Scripture. Absolute application, without regard to culture or feelings. We can speak where Bible speaks, and be silent where it is silent ; we can do Bible things in Bible ways and call Bible things by Bible names.

Do the writers in the Bible even foresee such a possibility. They tell us we can and must “speak as the very utterances of God.” They tell us we can all be of one mind and one spirit, as long as we focus on the gospel of Christ (see I Pet. 4:11a; Phil 1:27; I Cor. 1:10).

But aren't there insurmountable obstacles? Yes, as long as people are loyal to something or someone other than Christ and insist on a relative, instead of absolute, view of truth, there can be no religious unity. It takes faith and “faith comes from hearing and hearing from the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17).

Religious unity is a wonderful thing and it is attainable. As long as our goal is (1) to be Christians only and (2) to work at making the church just like those of the first century we can realize the unity of all of those who are of like mind. Our plea to everyone we know and love is to go back to the Bible, and the Bible only, for the answers.

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