

THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

The following article was written by Larry Fife. Larry is the student whom we currently support at the Memphis School of Preaching. I asked Larry to send me an article so that the congregation might get somewhat acquainted with him while he is in school. Larry is married to Lori, and they have two sons named Tyler and Christian. Larry is a former Air Force pilot and is a graduate from the University of Tennessee at Martin. For the last few years Larry and his family made their home in Rutherford, TN and were members of the Christian Chapel Church of Christ in Kenton, TN. Currently Larry is preaching at Christian Chapel while he is in school. Keep Larry and his family in your prayers while he is in school given that this is a very stressful time in their lives.—Andy

FAITH & DOUBT - WHAT IS FAITH?

"There is no way the Bible can be accurate!" Do you really expect me to believe that Jesus came back to life after he died? Give me a break!"

Comments such as these can cause one to doubt his faith. Doubt can lead someone to think he has become an unbeliever because he has lost his faith. There is nothing wrong with "honest" doubt. There are some things however that doubt is not.

1) Doubt is not skepticism. While there is nothing wrong with honest doubt, there is much wrong with "dishonest doubt," which is nothing more than skepticism. Skepticism is simply the willful decision to doubt everything deliberately, virtually rejecting what is highly probable.

2) Doubt is not unbelief. Unbelief is the decision not to have faith, which is a far cry from what doubt is. Doubt may amount to nothing more than difficulty in understanding something. There is no reason to feel guilty about honest doubt. Faith and doubt are not mutually exclusive. However, faith and unbelief are mutually exclusive.

Everyone has some sort of faith. Even a die-hard atheist has faith that there is no God. They may not think of it as faith, but the fact that no one has "proved" the non-existence of God means that they accept their belief in no God by faith.

The Atheist would challenge our faith by saying ours is not a reasonable faith because there is nothing to substantiate it. We will look at evidence that demonstrates that not only is our faith reasonable, it is the most likely probability.

I do want to make a point before continuing. People rarely come to faith with resolved doubts. Francis Bacon said, "If you start with total certainty, you will end up with doubt, but if you start with doubt, you will end up with certainty." Faith is not going to be faith solely because of the evidence we will be looking at. Notice the following passage:

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen (Heb 11:1)."

Our faith is not based on the ability to prove or disprove. If we could prove 100% that our belief is true, then our faith would no longer be faith. So when we engage in a defense of our faith, we are showing "evidence" that our faith is "reasonable." However, the bottom line is that we accept our Lord by faith.

Our faith comes from hearing, not necessarily from proving (Rom 10:17). While proving can remove obstacles to faith and strengthen it, faith is ultimately a decision. The Greek word for faith carries the idea of trust and obedience. James discusses this in James 2:19. Real faith is not merely mental assent, or even acceptance of some facts. It is an active trust in our Lord.

-Larry Fife

CHRISTIANITY: A LABOR OF LOVE

Text: _____

- I. Love, for _____ who _____ us.
 - A. The _____ of His _____
 - B. The _____ of our _____
- II. Love, for _____ who _____ us.
 - A. The _____ of man's _____
 - B. The _____ of man's _____
 - C. The _____ of our _____
- III. Love for _____
 - A. It's not a _____, it's a _____
 - B. One who made a _____
 - C. The _____ of a _____

REMEMBER THOU THE LAW

Text: _____

- I. _____ to God's _____
 - A. _____ through the _____
 - B. _____ through the _____
- II. _____ to God's _____
 - A. God's _____ Direction
 - B. God's _____ Direction
 - C. God's _____ Direction
- III. _____ to God's _____
 - A. The _____ of _____
 - B. The _____ of _____

**THE WAY THAT IS SAFE
AND CANNOT BE WRONG**

Several years ago we lived in Savannah, Georgia. It was a new experience for us to watch huge freighters entering the Savannah River to travel fifteen miles inland to the state docks. It did not seem possible that the massive ships could achieve such a feat. However, we learned that a channel had been dredged for safe passage. And as long as the captain sterred the vessel in the channel, there was safety. It was not necessary for him to know all the hidden dangers; it was only essential to possess knowledge for the safe way.

This principle is applicable in the study of the New Testament. Jesus taught men to enter the "strait gate" and walk in the "narrow" way (Matthew 7:13-14; cf. Proverbs 14:12). We should seek out the way that is infallibly safe and cannot be wrong in religion. We suggest studying the following aspects of this way. It cannot be wrong to:

- Accept the Holy Scriptures as being the inspired Word of God (II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:3,21).
- Believe in God and in His Son Jesus Christ (Hebrews 11:6; John 8:24; Matthew 16:16).
- Teach sinners to repent of sins (Acts 17:30-31; II Peter 3:9).
- Be baptized for the remission of sins, having confessed one's faith in Jesus (Romans 10:10; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:35-39).
- Be immersed in water instead of being sprinkled (John 3:23; Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12).
- Have an obedient faith instead of a faith-only religion (Matthew 7:21; Hebrews 5:8-9; James 2:14-26).
- Wear the name of Christ (Christian) rather than names that honor men/movements (Acts 11:26; 26:28; I Peter 4:16; Romans 16:16).
- Sing praises without adding instruments (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12; 13:15).
- Partake of the Lord's Supper on the first day of every week (I Corinthians 11:23-30; Acts 20:7).
- Be faithful in attendance to the periods of worship (Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:24-25; James 4:17).
- Be pure in heart and live a faithful Christian life (Matthew 5:8; Hebrews 12:14; Revelation 2:10).

We need to possess the wisdom of following the safe way wherein is assurance and security. Why take a risk when the safe way can be learned by all who choose to do so? Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). The infallible Word of God provides us the infallibly safe way that cannot be wrong (John 12:48).

-Raymond Elliott

THE BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE

When studying through the Bible, the astute learner would observe that Deuteronomy, in many ways, is a repetition of Leviticus. However, just because much of it is the same as has been studied before does not mean that its text is worthless to the twenty-first century student. In addition to the law that is presented again, there are historical accounts that are important to one's general knowledge of the Bible and its events. Deuteronomy is referred to as the "book of remembrance" because of its theme. "It consists of a series of discourses by Israel's 120-year old leader (Moses) to the new generation who survived the forty years of wilderness wanderings and were now ready to possess the land of promise" (Young). These, who at the first giving of the law would have been younger than twenty years old, were not responsible for learning it when first given, and though possibly taught it to some degree by their parents during the wanderings, now are in need of a formal reception of this law that they might hopefully submit to it better than did those who went before them.

Deuteronomy, which means "the second law," derives its name from the Septuagint's mistranslation of Deuteronomy 17:18. Deuteronomy is not a second law, but is simply a restating of the original law received at Mount Sinai. It was written chronologically following the events of Numbers in which the first generation of Israel, which had been delivered out of Egypt, disobeyed God and died in the wilderness with the new generation then growing into the "paternals" of the nation. Wherein the events of Genesis spanned some 2,500 years, Exodus spanned some 215 years, and Numbers spanned some 40 years, Deuteronomy is believed to have covered about one month of ancient history. And like the others of Moses' writings, would have been written shortly before 1400 B.C.

Moses is, with little question from Bible believers, considered the author with one difference in opinion. Wherein there is little question that Moses wrote Deuteronomy 1-33, there is some argument as to whether he wrote chapter 34 in which his own death and burial is recorded. It is personally believed that wherein Moses was inspired to write this book by God, and God exists outside of time being able to see all events from past, present, and future that this is probably the means through which Moses did in fact pen this final chapter himself. However, if this is not the case (which is possible) then the other logical conclusion is that Joshua, Moses' successor, penned the final chapter following Moses' death.

Deuteronomy is vastly known for its text of law. It has been counted that this book alone contains 613 commandments, comprised of 245 "thou shalt" and 368 "thou shalt not" with laws that pertain to "food, diseases, purification, places of sacrifice, worship, marriage, idolatry, vows, morality, penalties for disobedience, and other civil, social, national, and personal duties" (Young). However, one little known fact regarding Deuteronomy is its emphasis on the love of God. Law was, and is, provided because God in His love desires for His children to be governed according to that which is right. If God did not love man then He would allow him to live in anarchy and chaos. But, because of His love He provided law by which Israel could live healthily, happily, and honestly until the Messiah could be sent bringing redemption.

Likewise, should Deuteronomy be recognized for its contribution to the rest of the Bible. There are at least 356 Old Testament references to Deuteronomy and at least 96 in the New Testament. It was from Deuteronomy that Christ quoted when answering the nonsensical temptations of Satan in the wilderness of Matthew 4 (Deuteronomy 8:3; 6:16; 6:13) as well as many other times in which He turned His mind back to Deuteronomy to make a point (Matthew 22:37-38; Mark 7:10; 10:19,29-30).

Obviously, though, the most important and interesting look at Deuteronomy brings back the picture of Christ as seen in its text. The most blatant portrait of Christ in Deuteronomy would be found in Deuteronomy 18:15 where Moses wrote "*The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.*" Christ is that Prophet risen from the midst of Israel unto whom all men were and are to hearken. It was Christ whom Peter proclaimed to be this Prophet in Acts 3:22-23 and 26 saying, "*For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people...Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.*" Truly Christ is that great Prophet, but not only Prophet, but Priest, King, and also God.

Deuteronomy, though commonly ignored, is truly a great book of antiquity from which much knowledge can be gleaned. May it always be upheld for its truth and wisdom imparted through a study of it.

-Andy Brewer